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ABSTRACT

THE CREATION OF A NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT COACHING AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Robert S. Folkenberg, Jr.

Adviser: Russell Burrill

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE CREATION OF A NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT COACHING
AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH

Name of researcher: Robert S. Folkenberg, Jr.

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Russell Burrill, D.Min.

Date completed: July 2001

The Topic

Natural Church Development is a church paradigm that is gaining acceptance in a large number of Adventist churches. Two issues have arisen due to this interest in NCD: (1) a need to study NCD from an Adventist theological perspective, and (2) a large number of the churches that are interested in implementing NCD are having a difficult time doing so.

The Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to answer some of the theological questions posed by the whole NCD, healthy church paradigm while at the same time

developing a user-friendly, practical, Seventh-day-Adventist-sensitive implementation guide for use by local churches and coaches.

The Sources

A thorough study of already-published NCD materials serves as an appropriate backdrop for the development of a future Adventist implementation guide. In addition, other authors who have written on church health are surveyed to better understand the relationship of NCD to the related genre available to the church. Also, books and resources on planned congregational change dynamics are reviewed, as change is at the heart of any implementation process. Finally, the Bible and the writings of Ellen White serve to illuminate the theological discussions on NCD.

Conclusions

The principles and quality characteristics as espoused by NCD are not only relevant to the Adventist church but also in harmony with their doctrinal understanding of the church and its role in the world. In addition, the conclusion to this dissertation is the development of a practical implementation guide for Adventist churches (see Appendix B).

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE CREATION OF A NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT
COACHING AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Robert S. Folkenberg, Jr.

July 2001

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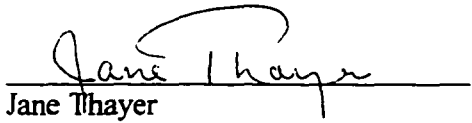
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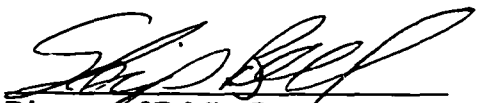
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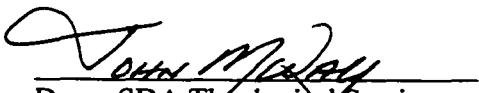

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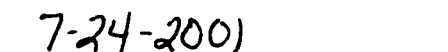
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To my parents,
Robert and Anita Folkenberg,
whose faithful and consistent dedication and labor
for God and His church have given me a clear and compelling
example of a life lived in the service of the King.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ask any church member or pastor if they wish for better congregational health, and the answer inevitably is a positive one. Earnest members and church leaders alike hope for, pray for, and work for a more vibrant and healthy congregation.

There is also a real desire by pastors to discover a workable paradigm for church growth. This is evidenced by the number of church growth books available on the market as well as the many seminar hours spent by pastors learning from the pros how “to do church.” Pastors are literally exhausted doing “fire-fighter” ministry—reactively putting out one fire after another, the goal being simply to keep one’s head above water!

In other areas, administrators and pastors alike are verging on desperation as they helplessly watch their baptismal and church growth figures slow down, plateau, or even decline.¹ Their search for a solution to their present and unacceptable state of affairs leads them to explore alternatives to the often-taunted gimmick and model-based quick fixes available in much of the church growth literature today.

With these congregational dynamics present across a large spectrum of Adventism, it is no wonder that many local church leaders, pastors, and conference

¹ Some researchers predict that if present trends in membership decline continue, by the year 2050, 60 percent of all existing congregations in America will close their doors. Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 16.

officials are turning to the church-health, qualitatively based Natural Church Development paradigm. Entire conferences are promoting a healthy church approach to church growth. Seminar after seminar is given across the country all with the hope of improving the quality of church life that naturally results in the increased ability of the church to reach the harvest for the Lord.

However, in the process of implementing the Natural Church Development (NCD) paradigm, in the process of learning all about what a healthy church looks like and feels like, many Adventist churches get no further than merely administering the NCD-provided church profile. They only reach a diagnosis as to their present church health. In a recent study done of churches that had taken the NCD profile, 42 percent had no implementation strategy in place to improve their weakest area of church health, their minimum factor.¹

A number of reasons could explain this situation: First, the church could be experiencing some conflict that prevents it from focusing its energies towards positive, church-health-building endeavors. Second, change itself is never easy. Generally speaking, the greatest factor keeping a church from embracing change is excessive comfort with the status quo.¹ As the saying goes, “If it isn’t broke, don’t fix it.” Many congregations do not realize their present state of congregational health. They are in corporate denial, and therefore change—a strategic implementation and intervention plan to improve congregational health—is seen as a nuisance, an undesirable “rocking of the boat” that they would be happy to do without.

¹ For more details on this study, which was conducted as part of this D.Min. project, please refer to chapter 4 of this document.

Finally, another reason that a large proportion of Seventh-day Adventist congregations goes no further than doing a congregational checkup is that there has been no Adventist-sensitive implementation material readily available for use by local church pastors and coaches. There has been nothing available, no tool, handbook, or guide that could help the local church leadership to address issues hindering change, or providing concrete and workable implementation strategies for Adventist churches.

In short, this shortage is the main reason for this dissertation and project. My hope is to develop an Adventist-sensitive implementation guide that can be used by local pastors and church leaders in strengthening their church health.

Justification for the Project

The church of Christ is an organic, living entity. It is called the Body of Christ.² It is also called the Bride of Christ.³ It is made up of people—saved people, called out to grow and serve God in community. As such, it is understandable that Christ's desire for his Body is for it to be healthy. This is the first justification for undertaking this project: the need for more vibrant congregational health.

In addition, many Adventist pastors and church leaders surveyed have mentioned that the material produced by the ChurchSmart or the Institute of Natural Church Development in Germany just does not quite fit the Adventist context and congregation. In addition, some pastors have confessed that some of the membership

¹ Lyle Schaller, *Strategies for Change* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 38.

² 1 Cor 12:12-27.

³ Rev 19:7; 21:9.

is reticent to accept a paradigm and implementation process that is solely developed by non-Adventist people. Thus, this project will help satisfy these two unique needs.

An additional justification for this project is simply the fact that most congregations seeking to improve their health falter precisely in their attempts to implement change. With the tools available from Natural Church Development, it is relatively easy to diagnose a church's "sickness." It is far more difficult to do something about it. The aim of this project is to provide some practical tools which can be used by Adventist congregations to actually "do something" about their health.

One final justification bears pointing out: Too often pastors and church leaders seeking to implement a strategy to improve church health do not understand the "big picture." A few simple definitions of terms are mastered regarding the eight quality characteristics, but the more subtle realities of what it means to improve the quality of church life, as well as the biotic processes that will maximize any plans to improve these qualities, are often missed completely. This is borne out by the recent survey conducted of churches that have taken the NCD profile, which showed that only 17 percent of churches that were implementing the NCD paradigm utilized the biotic principles on an ongoing basis. Eighty-three percent said they never referred to them or only referred to them on occasion.¹ The reason these statistics are significant is that the biotic principles are at the heart of any effective implementation strategy. When they are overlooked, the whole process of change and renewal is hindered.

¹ See table 1.

TABLE 1
AN ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS IN
PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

Q#	Question	Options	Responses	Percentage
2	What is your present age?	Under 25	0	0%
		26-35	5	13%
		36-45	16	42%
		46-55	13	35%
		Over 55	4	10%
4	What is your average Sabbath attendance?	Less than 50	5	13%
		51-100	14	37%
		101-200	13	35%
		201-400	4	10%
		401-700	2	5%
		More than 700	0	0%
8	Was there any resistance to taking the NCD survey?	Yes	23	61%
		No	15	39%
10	How long has it been since you administered the NCD assessment questionnaire?	< 1 month	1	3%
		1-3 months	1	3%
		4-6 months	5	13%
		7-12 months	18	47%
		> 1 year	12	31%
		No response	1	3%
12	Have the eight quality characteristics been presented to the church in a sermon series?	Yes	16	42%
		No	22	58%
13	What is your church's minimum factor?	EL	3	8%
		GM	13	35%
		PS	1	3%
		FS	4	10%
		IW	6	16%
		HG	12	31%
		NE	0	0%
		LR	3	8%

Table 1—*Continued.*

Q#	Question	Options	Responses	Percentage
14	What was your church's maximum factor?	EL	5	13%
		GM	2	5%
		PS	10	26%
		FS	0	0%
		IW	3	8%
		HG	1	3%
		NE	8	21%
		LR	7	17%
		No response	2	5%
16	Has the whole church been notified of the results of the survey?	Yes	31	82
		No	7	18
18	What group of people has been working on an implementation strategy to address the minimum factor and over-all church health?	Church Board	17	45%
		Pastor only	4	10%
		Board of Elders	5	13%
		Ad-hoc Cmmtt.	5	13%
		Informal group	8	21%
19	Has a strategy been agreed upon to address the minimum factor?	Yes	21	55%
		No	17	45%
21	Have the biotic principles, as explained by Christian Schwarz, played any role in the development of your strategy?	A big role	6	17%
		Moderate role	15	39%
		No role	10	26%
		No response	7	18%
22	Has your church been working with a coach in implementing NCD principles?	Yes	2	5%
		No	27	71%
		We'd like to, but don't know how to contact one	4	10%
		No response	5	13%

Note: This table contains the responses given by 38 different churches to a selected group of questions dealing with the implementation of the NCD paradigm in the local church. See Appendix A for a sample of the survey used in this study.

The implementation guide, as well as the proceeding chapters, will help provide a solid understanding of the Natural Church Development paradigm as well as its effective implementation process in the local Seventh-day Adventist church.

Definition of Terms

It would be good to take some time to define a few terms. Throughout this paper the term Natural Church Development (NCD) is used. When it is used, I am referring to the work done by Christian Schwarz in the area of church growth and to the paradigm he developed in which the church is seen as an organic, living organism that should be healthy. Once it is healthy, Schwarz suggests—and his extensive research bears it out—the church will be free to experience the natural growth automatisms that God has built into His church. Other terms are defined on an as-needed basis as the dissertation unfolds.

Description of Methodology

This project has as its desired end the development of a usable, practical, and distinctive Adventist implementation guide for use in local Adventist churches. This objective was kept in view throughout the entire research and writing process.

The process that was followed in writing this dissertation and the enclosed implementation guide was first to review the current literature available on the Natural Church Development paradigm as well as to study the theological assumptions that the paradigm uses as its backdrop. In addition, literature on the “healthy church” was reviewed and analyzed with the purpose of understanding NCD in the context of the writings of other contemporary writers.

In addition, a study was made on the process of change, the dynamics associated with change, and the important role of leadership in the whole process. Adventist sources, when available, were also consulted. Special emphasis was placed on understanding Ellen White's understanding of church health as well as her perspective on each of the eight quality characteristics of church health as defined by NCD.

In addition to the theological studies mentioned above, a survey was designed and sent to as many churches as possible that had completed the NCD profile with the purpose of evaluating their implementation progress and strategies. With the responses in hand from these churches, as well as with the previously mentioned literature review and theological studies serving as a background, an implementation guide was written.

The aim of this whole project is to create an easily used, practical tool for the local church leader and congregation to use as they prayerfully embark on a "lifestyle" modification program to improve their health and better fit them for reaching people for Christ.

CHAPTER 2

FOUNDATIONS FOR A HEALTHY CHURCH THEOLOGY

Introduction

Some churches are growing. Some seem frozen in time, neither growing nor declining. Others are on a downward plunge towards inevitable closure. A clear example of this visible dichotomy can be seen in the history of mainline denominations in the United States starting in the mid-1960s. Almost all denominations had grown during the previous twenty years, but after 1965 they all began to decline. However, even though denominations as a whole were declining in number and influence, some local churches were still experiencing amazing growth.¹ Why?

One way to understand why this phenomenon happened is to fully explore the organic biblical analogy of the church as a body, more clearly, the Body of Christ. If the church is a living, organic entity, then it would stand to reason that it could experience different levels of health. Some churches could enjoy wonderful and vigorous health, while others could be afflicted with diseases which hamper their God-ordained growth and even threaten their very existence.

We would all agree that any biblical analogy can be stretched to the point of the absurd, but at its foundation, the church as the Body of Christ—a living, organic

¹ C. Peter Wagner, *The Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 11.

community of Christ's disciples—makes sense both biblically and experientially. Church growth consultants and writers also agree as they continually refer to churches as being either healthy or unhealthy. Notable among these are three recently published books on church health: one by Stephen A. Machia entitled *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Quality Characteristics*; C. Peter Wagner's book entitled *The Healthy Church*; and finally Christian Schwarz's book entitled *Natural Church Development*.¹ These authors are not the only ones speaking of church health. Pastors also exhort their congregation towards that goal of becoming a healthy church.

However a question remains unanswered, Is this healthy church metaphor biblical? Is it theologically sound? In this chapter I will examine the biblical and theological foundations for the "healthy church" metaphor and then, by the means of a contemporary literature review as well as reference to scriptural principles, I present a list of criteria by which we can evaluate any "healthy church" resource or paradigm.

Biblical Foundations

The word "church" appears more than 110 times in the New Testament. In each of these references, not once does it refer to a building or place of worship. "The word 'church' is the English rendering of *ekklesia*, made up of two Greek words: *ek* (out from among) and *kaleo* (to call). The literal meaning of church is, therefore, 'the called-out assembly.' The church is 'the people who belong to the

¹ For a more complete list of recently published books on Church Health please refer to the Bibliography.

Lord’.”¹ It is all about people. The church is made up of living, breathing, and complex people.

As a called-out assembly of individuals, the church is therefore an organic, living organization. As Max DePree said, “each of us is an atom in a living, breathing, and changing organism.”² This view of the church as a living body is an often repeated metaphor used in Scripture.³ However, the metaphor is never totally defined or developed.

In particular, Paul’s use of the metaphor and “the various nuances he gives to the word *body* in his writings create enormous difficulties for interpreters trying to build a systematic, coherent Pauline ecclesiology.”⁴ However, the absence of an explanation as to the meaning of the church as the body of Christ could also indicate that the idea was already well accepted and understood by the early church at the time of writing. Though we cannot build a total ecclesiology around the Body-Church metaphor, we can nonetheless learn some general principles and criteria which can aid us in communicating and implementing a useful “healthy church” paradigm in the local church. Let us begin by reviewing some of the biblical passages that speak about the body of Christ.

¹ Rex Edwards, “The Church: It’s Nature and Design,” *Ministry*, July/August 1995, 36.

² Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 3.

³ Other metaphors used for the church are: Flock of God (Acts 20:28); House of God (1 Tim 3:15; Eph 2:19-22); Royal Priesthood (1 Pet 2:9); Living Stones and a Spiritual House (1 Pet 2:5); Bride of Christ (Rev 21:9).

⁴ Paul B. Brown, *In and for the World: Bringing the Contemporary into Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 4.

The Body of Christ

A good place to start is with Rom 12:4-5 where Paul describes the church in the following way: "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."¹

Like the body, the church is made up of various members. The Greek for the word "members" in this passage is the same word describing both the parts of the physical body as well as the spiritual body of Christ. The church is a close-knit group of people, a "one another" community, bound together by a commitment to the Head, Jesus Christ, because of their gratitude for the love demonstrated on their behalf.² This Body of Christ, this church, is called out to exemplify unity and love to the world. This Body of Christ has purpose and direction.

An even more detailed and extensive description of the Body of Christ can be found in 1 Cor 12:12-27:

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical references are taken from the New King James Version.

² 1 John 4:19.

weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

Notice the extensive metaphorical applications in this passage. Members are likened to eyes, ears, hands, and feet. Each has his or her particular function. Each has a particular relationship to the whole. Each is equally important, despite the perceived status of each functional role. Paul's point is not to delineate the exact and precise nature of the church per se, but to use a metaphor to explain the point that God desires proper diversity in unity.¹

In fact, of particular interest to our discussion, is the effect a weak or suffering member can have on the body as a whole. Like the body, the individual members in the church have a systemic relationship with one another. When one suffers, all members "suffer with it." Likewise, if one is honored, or as the literal Greek implies, "glorified," all members of the body are in turn blessed and strengthened. This systemic and organic nature of the Body is further described in Rom 12:15 where Paul encourages us to "rejoice with those that rejoice . . . [and] weep with those that weep." Throughout the New Testament Paul uses the phrase "one another": "We are members of one another" (Eph 4:25); we are to "build one another up" (1 Thess 5:11 RSV), and "love one another" (1 John 4:7). As Steinke says in his book, *The Healthy*

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *Epistle to First Corinthians, The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 602.

Church: A Systems Approach, “this is an organic view of the church, of cell working with cell to ensure wholeness.”¹

Ecclesiological Principles

At this point we can deduce from what has been presented so far, two clear ecclesiological principles. First, each member of the Body of Christ is equally important and valuable in its contribution to the total effectiveness of the church. In short, every member has an equally important *ministry* to perform for the good of the Body of Christ. Second, the church is an interconnected, symbiotic organism. The church, to be effective and healthy, must therefore experience *unity*. It must live, work, and worship as a unit. For this reason Dietrich Bonhoeffer could say that the church must be considered as a person not as an institution.² Therefore, as an organic unit, what affects one member, affects all. There is a living cord that runs through all members, binding them together in love and purpose.

It is no wonder then that the words “whole” and “health” come from the same root (the old English word “hal,” as in the words “hale and hearty”). Only when we realize that we are part of a “whole” will we be able to enjoy true health. From a secular standpoint this process of seeing the whole is called system thinking. One of the leading proponents of this paradigm is Peter Senge who describes this discipline as one that focuses on “seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static ‘snapshots’.”³ To

¹ Steinke, 8.

² Brown, 6.

³ Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: Mastering the Five Practices of the Learning Organization* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990), 68-69.

be healthy as a church we must live in unity. To live in unity, we must be able to see the big picture. And the most important aspect of this big picture is Jesus Christ—the Head of the Body.

Two related passages help us define this big picture, in particular the relationship of the members to the Head, Jesus Christ. These texts also highlight some further ecclesiological principles. These two passages also clearly and explicitly state that the church is the Body of Christ. The first text is found in Col 1:18 “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Again, in Eph 1:22-23, Paul states: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

What was alluded to in Rom 12 is now made explicit. It is the Head that binds everything together. It is the Head, Jesus Christ, who provides the body with direction, meaning, and purpose. The Head “fills all in all.” The members are merely an extension of the Head.¹ As Gal 2:20 states so beautifully, members of the church have been crucified with Christ; they no longer live, but Christ lives in them.

This “directive” principle gives the church its purpose, mainly to serve the Head. As the hands and feet of the human body move at the will of the head, so the members of the church are created, gifted, and empowered to fulfill the dictates of the divine will. John Miller, in his insightful book entitled *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*, describes this relationship between the members and the Head of the church in this way. “The nature of the church is not first of all to serve itself but God.

¹ Gal 3:28ff.

Everyone of us has a part in this service, because we all belong to Him, are sanctified by Him, and are accepted by Him.”¹

Because we are under the directive of the Head, He “feeds and cares” for the church.² As Rex Edwards points out, Jesus gives Himself “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”³ We could say, in summary, that a healthy church must then be theologically and pragmatically *Christ centered and Christ serving*.

The Head of the church has yet another function:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . . speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:11-12, 15-16)

Before I comment on this text, a parallel passage should be read. Col 2:19 describes the member who is puffed up by his fleshly mind and is not “holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God.”

Once again the church is referred to as the body with Christ as the Head. What is interesting about these two passages is that the Head’s (Jesus Christ) purpose for the church is that it “grow up,” “edify,” that every joint and part enjoy an “effective working” relationship so that the body might enjoy “growth” in love. Paul

¹ C. John Miller, *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1999), 45.

² Eph 5:29.

³ Edwards, 38.

is in essence saying that, empowered by the Head, directed by Christ, the divine purpose for the church is for it to work effectively together towards body-growth and edification. In short, a healthy body will grow, edify, and effectively work together. This is the purpose of the church—to *grow*. God intends that the church become stronger, bigger—a more effective living letter to the world of the love of God as seen in Jesus Christ.

When a church does not accomplish these goals as outlined in these passages, it is not experiencing ultimate health. C. Peter Wagner states that one of the signs of good church health is growth. “If a given church is faithful to the Lord, and if it is in a healthy condition, God can be expected to do what He did to the Church that came into being on the Day of Pentecost. He will ordinarily add ‘to the church daily those who [are] being saved’ (Acts 2:47).”¹

In summary we can say that the biblical metaphor of the church as the Body of Christ yields the following five ecclesiological principles:

1. The church is composed of various members who make up one body, knit together and called to be a close and united community. Every member, in turn, is called to carry out an equally important *ministry*.

2. Because the church, with its various members, is knit together and connected by the same Lord, it is part of a system. It functions as a symbiotic organism. When one member suffers, all members, in some spiritual or material way, also suffer. When one is blessed and honored, all are lifted and glorified together.

¹ Wagner, 9.

Therefore, *unity* must pervade the life of a church for it to experience vibrant church health.

3. The church derives its directive and purpose from the Head, Jesus Christ. He is its Leader. He is the Lord and master of the church. Each member of the church lives to do His bidding and achieve His goals. Therefore, a healthy church is *Christ centered* in its theology and orientation.

4. It also *lives for Jesus*—to do His bidding and to glorify His name.

5. The Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, desires that all members of the church *grow* up, become edified, work together, and experience growth. Growth is part of His hope and plan for His church.

In conclusion we could say, He desires that His body enjoy total health. When the church is connected to the Head, Jesus Christ, the church enjoys health. Disconnected from the Head, and when in opposition to the above five principles, church health will suffer. Disease can set in which hinders its God-appointed and desired purpose.

Purpose for Church Health

Why should the church enjoy good health? For good health's sake? For longevity's sake? Health is not an end in itself. It is a means to accomplish one thing, to bring glory to God.¹ Speaking specifically of the church Paul states:

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or thin, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Eph 3:20-21)

¹ 1 Cor 10:31.

The purpose of the church is to bring God glory. Rom 15:6 goes on to underline the purpose of the church which is that “in one mind and one mouth” they “might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And Jesus Himself put it this way: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

The church exists to glorify God. The healthier a church is, the more powerful will be its ability to glorify the Father in heaven. This should be the passion of the church. Its all-pervasive and empowering purpose is to bring glory to God. The healthier the Body—the more connected and drawn together by a love and respect for the Head—the more able the Body is to present God with honor and praise.

Insights from Ellen White’s Writings

That Ellen White supports the biblical metaphor of the church being the Body of Christ goes without saying. The question is, Did she also subscribe to the metaphorical implication of a healthy or sick church? The answer is a resounding “yes.” Space does not allow us to review all her quotations regarding the healthy church. However, a few are provided as examples of the numerous references to God’s desire for a healthy church. First, speaking of the church in Battle Creek, Michigan, and its unhealthy relationship with the spiritually wandering Health Institute, she writes:

It was the moral darkness of the church that had the greatest influence to create the moral darkness and spiritual death in the Institute. Had the church been in a healthy condition, she could have sent a vitalizing, healthful current to this arm of the body. But the church was sickly, had not the favor of God, and enjoyed not the light of his countenance. A sickly, deathly influence was

circulated all through the living body, until the disease was apparent everywhere.¹

Here, Ellen White not only describes a church as being healthy but as being sickly, with a deathly influence circulating throughout the body. She stretches the metaphor to include health, sickness, and death, as well as the effects of poor circulation on the body. It is clear that she understood that the Body of Christ could either be healthy or sick or even die.

In many other places, Ellen White describes some essential qualities and characteristics that bring health to the church. The lack of these same qualities brings weakness and sickness, such as the lack of good leadership. Ellen White writes:

No church can be in a healthy, flourishing condition unless its leaders shall take firm, decided measures to repress this fault—finding, accusing spirit wherever it exists.²

In two other places she states:

A healthy church is composed of healthy members, of men and women who have a personal experience in true godliness.³

In order for the church to be healthy, it must be composed of healthy Christians. But in our churches and institutions there are many sickly Christians.⁴

Echoing the principles outlined in 1 Cor 12, Ellen White underlines the organic and symbiotic relationship individual members have on the church body as a whole. When the members are healthy and meaningfully connected to the Head, then

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church at Battle Creek* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 42.

² Ellen G. White, "Labors in Christiana," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 19, 1886, 1.

³ Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 710.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1951), 592.

the body experiences vibrant health. When this genuine relationship with the head is broken, or when unity and strife are present among the members, then the church in turn is sick. That God must be a part of church life for it to be healthy is explicitly stated when Ellen White writes to her son and instructs him to “pray for the Lord to work in His own way upon the minds of the people, that a healthy church may be raised up in Williamstown.”¹

In the above-cited references Ellen White also gives us a glimpse of some of the criteria necessary for a church to be healthy. The Lord must be at work, directing the church. Members should have a personal relationship with Jesus and be led by godly, principled leaders. In her *Testimonies to the Church*, she gives this warning to the church, which sheds light on some key ingredients that are necessary to ensure church health:

There is not that *consecration* to God, that *devotion to His service*, and that disinterested labor for the *upbuilding* of His cause which would make you a prosperous and healthy church [emphasis mine].²

The sickly, unhealthy state of the church reveals a church afraid to work, fearing that self-denial will be required. The presence of the Lord is ever seen where every energy of the church is aroused to meet the spiritual responsibilities.³

Sanctification through the Holy Spirit binds up man's will and purpose with the will and purpose of God. If we have not these features in our experience, the church will be sickly and feeble.⁴

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Paulson Collection of E.G.W. Letters* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1983), 103.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5:354.

³ Ellen G. White, *Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library*, vol. 1 (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1983), 99.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13 (Silver Spring, MD: E.G. White Estate, 1993), 191.

Consecration to God, devotion, and singleness of purpose on behalf of His Kingdom, intelligent and well-thought-out work will help bring health to the church. The opposite is also true. When in the pursuit of building up the church of Christ we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, when we are afraid to work unreservedly for His Kingdom, then sickness follows. And when sickness is present in the Body of Christ, no glory is given to God and no growth takes place. In short, God suffers and the church suffers. Church health is indeed God's goal for His church.

Ellen White sums up the importance of church health by encouraging His church to “put intelligence into [our] work, and seek to bring the church of God into a healthy condition.”¹ As the church has been given a special purpose and message to proclaim at this final hour of earth's history, we cannot be content with the status quo. We cannot be happy with average church health. The church must be constantly “seeking” total and vibrant health. Anything less would mean less glory to God. Anything less would mean a diminished ability of the church to reach the harvest of souls waiting to hear and receive the Good News of Jesus and His soon coming.

¹ Ellen G. White, “The Work at Fresno, California,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 19, 1888, 1.

Review of Other Authors

It is evident from a contemporary literature review that most, if not all, church growth experts, pastors, and pastoral ministry specialists believe that a church can experience varied degrees of health. Entire books have been written that from title to epilogue assume that a healthy church is the ideal that the Body of Christ should seek to attain.

We have seen in the previous sections that this “assumption” on the part of church ministry experts is valid. Churches can be healthy and can be sick. Churches can even die. Let us now turn to some of the most useful of these books with a view to finding some common principles and criteria to help us define what a healthy church should look and “be” like.

This assumed dichotomy between healthy and unhealthy churches, or true and false churches, can be seen even in the writings of Martin Luther. In one of his long arguments against the papists’ claim that their church is the true church, he sets forth this challenge: “We are concerned *non de nomine*, ‘not with the name’ of the church, but with its essence.”¹

He then goes on to outline ten characteristics of the true and ancient church—a list that he suggests describes all present-day true and healthy churches. His list includes churches that practice baptism, the Lord’s Supper, church discipline, preaching the Word, the Apostle’s Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, respect for temporal

¹ Martin Luther, “Against Hansworst,” in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 41, ed. Eric W. Gritsch and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 194.

powers, respect for the sanctity of marriage, willingness to suffer persecution, and last, to do so without retaliation.¹

A recently published book by Stephen Macchia is a modern example of one individual's attempt to describe a healthy church. In his book entitled *Becoming a Healthy Church* he begins by posing the question which he will answer in the following pages: "What would you say constitutes the foundation of a healthy church ministry?"² As is the case with almost every author that discusses the issue of church health, the question as to whether it is theologically accurate to describe a church as healthy or sick is never discussed. It is simply assumed. Stephen Macchia then goes on to describe, based on research conducted in 100 New England churches and 1,899 survey opinions generated, ten characteristics of a healthy church. He divides these characteristics into three categories:

Level 1: How I Relate with God

God's Empowering Presence
God-Exalting Worship
Spiritual Disciplines

Level 2: How I Relate with My Church Family

Learning and Growing in Community
A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships
Servant-Leadership Development

Level 3: How My Church Ministers and Manages

An Outward Focus
Wise Administration
Networking with the Body of Christ
Stewardship and Generosity.³

¹ Ibid., 194–198.

² Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church—10 Characteristics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 17.

³ Ibid., 23.

Macchia believes that since the members in the church are not perfect, those imperfections will be evident in the church as a whole. However, acknowledging that members, as a church, are a “work in progress,” he insists that church members need to work together, assisting one another “in the process of becoming a healthy church.”¹

In a similar vein, John Miller defines the healthy church as being a body of believers that is passionate about reaching out to each other and to the harvest in its community. He bemoans the prevalent lack of spiritual health in churches today and quotes Richard Lovelace to describe graphically the general status quo of congregations throughout the United States:

Pastors gradually settle down and lose interest in being change agents in the church. An unconscious conspiracy arises between their flesh and that of their congregations. It becomes tacitly understood that the laity will give pastors special honor in the exercise of their gifts, if the pastors will agree to leave their congregations’ pre-Christian lifestyles undisturbed and do not call for the mobilization of lay gifts for the work of the kingdom. Pastors are permitted to become ministerial superstars. Their pride is fed and their congregations are permitted to remain herds of sheep in which each has cheerfully turned to his own way.²

Instead of the unity and mutual support described in 1 Cor 12, the unhealthy church is scattered both in mission and commitment. Pastors abandon their prophetic calling to exhort and their apostolic ministry to build up churches for the honor of God, and replace these qualities with pride and the desire for acceptance and peace.

That pride is a common ill afflicting the health of the church is also corroborated by Dan Southerland when he states that pride is a “major problem in

¹ Ibid., 215.

² Richard Lovelace, quoted in John Miller, 19.

many of our churches and many of our church leaders.”¹ We are proud of our purity, proud of our doctrines, and proud of our heritage. Sometimes, churches are even proud of their smallness—since in their thinking, it must mean they are walking on the narrow road, the true and costly road that leads to heaven.

Another prominent book on the question of church health is simply entitled, *The Healthy Church*. However, the subtitle more clearly describes the real heart of this book: *Avoiding and Curing the 9 Diseases That Can Afflict Any Church*. C. Peter Wagner, drawing from his rich and varied experience as a church growth consultant, seminary professor and author, describes nine common sicknesses that often afflict churches. Some of the diseases, he admits, are terminal. Most, however, can be cured through a deliberate process of spiritual application and objective plans.

For the purposes of this discussion, I will bypass the description of these diseases and simply highlight his definition of eight qualitative characteristics, which he suggests are indicative of spiritual maturity and health. His list includes the following characteristics:

1. A well-articulated Philosophy of Ministry
2. Pastoral Leadership²
3. Strong Biblical Conviction
4. Personal Piety and Spiritual Formation
5. Spiritual Gifts
6. Fellowship Structures

¹ Dan Southerland, *Transitioning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 165.

² Wagner puts a great deal of emphasis on the role of effective leadership on church health and growth. He states: “The pastor of the church is the key person for determining the condition of the health and the growth of the congregation.” *Ibid.*, 125.

7. Meaningful Worship

8. Vision for the World.¹

All of these are qualitative in nature and are integral to church health.

However, he asserts, qualitative growth will show fruit quantitatively. A healthy church, like the early church, will grow—naturally. Wagner believes that when quality is present and the Holy Spirit is active in the church, the church will bear fruit that can be measured quantitatively.

One interesting thing to note is that in 1976 Wagner published a book entitled *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* in which he states what he believes are the vital signs of a healthy church. In 1979 he re-iterated these vital signs in his book entitled *Your Church Can Be Healthy*, which is actually more like a first edition of his previously mentioned book, *The Healthy Church* than anything else.² Wagner's desire, as with his later book on church health, is to identify what vital signs are present in vibrant, growing, and healthy congregations. Once these vital signs are known, then preventive health can be exercised with the purpose of maintaining and building up these vital signs of congregational health. He also asserts that healthy churches are less susceptible to disease.³

However, it is interesting to note that his list of “vital signs” of a healthy church has changed over the years.

¹ Ibid., 123-132.

² Wagner's 7 vital signs of a healthy church were used as the benchmarks of a healthy church in a study conducted in England of 330 Baptist churches, the results of which were published in 1981. Paul Beasley-Murray and Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* (London: Bible Society, 1981).

³ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Be Healthy* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 21.

His first list of healthy church characteristics, first published in 1976 and then again in 1979 reads as follows:

1. Visionary pastoral leadership
2. Well mobilized laity
3. Able to meet needs of community
4. Internal groupings into celebration, congregation, and cell
5. Focused on one kind of people
6. Uses proven evangelistic methods
7. Priorities in order.¹

Another interesting book on church quality and health in the local church was co-authored by Norman Shawchuck and Gustave Rath. It is entitled *Benchmarks of Quality in the Church*.² The authors argue that quality is integral to congregational health and growth. A focus on quality, which they insist can be taught and learned, will produce churches that eliminate barriers to growth. Their definition of quality is also insightful and helpful in understanding their paradigm. Quality, they state, is “doing things right! Doing them right the first time. Striving to do things better today than we did yesterday, and keeping at it until we exceed being the best, and set our sights on the highest goal of all—perfection.”³

Quoting one denominational and church growth consultant, they state that by the year 2050, 60 percent of churches that are presently in active fellowship and ministry in the United States will close their doors. The reason, they believe, is poor

¹ Ibid., 21-24.

² Norman Shawchuck and Gustave Rath, *Benchmarks of Quality in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

³ Ibid., 13.

quality.¹ It does not matter how dedicated the saints might be to the task of ministry, “dedicated incompetency is still incompetency.”²

Shawchuck and Rath list, group and define twenty-one benchmark qualities that a church should possess. These twenty-one qualities can be grouped into seven general categories. They are listed here for reference and future comparison:

1. Religious Qualities
 - a. Spirituality
 - b. Believing
 - c. Vision Led
 - d. Mission Driven
 - e. Discerning
2. Lay-led Qualities
 - a. Significant Lay Participation
 - b. Guided by Lay Power
3. Gathering Qualities
 - a. Has Many Programs
 - b. Open Most of the Time
 - c. Communicative
4. Participative Qualities
 - a. Pastoral
 - b. Community
5. Outside-In Qualities
 - a. Listening
 - b. Pastoral
6. Expecting Qualities
 - a. Ethical
 - b. Has High Expectations
 - c. Excellence
 - d. Evaluative
7. Consequent Qualities
 - a. Healing
 - b. Joy
 - c. Growth.³

¹ Ibid., 12.

² Ibid., 16.

³ Ibid., 5-6.

They acknowledge that it is not possible for one church to address all quality areas at once. Therefore, they recommend that the church do some sort of assessment to ascertain what qualities are the weakest and have the most far-reaching and negative systemic effect on the church.¹ This process of assessment, which mirrors that of Macchia discussed above, is similar to the Natural Church Development paradigm that will be evaluated in depth in chapter 3. What is interesting to note at this point is that Shawchuck and Rath make reference to the systemic quality of the church. A weakness in one area can have a wide influence on other areas of church life and health. This systemic quality of the Body of Christ is defined and expounded in detail in what the Natural Church Development paradigm calls the Biotic Principles.²

Along with Schwarz, Shawchuck, and Rath, a book published by the Alban Institute and authored by Peter L. Steinke also looks at church health from a systems approach. Living organisms and systems require that the whole be seen from a process standpoint. Therefore, Steinke states, we need to look at the “health of a congregation as a process. Health is not a state or a thing. Health is a manifestation of processes, many hidden yet real.”³ In turn, when congregational health is viewed from this system’s point of view, then a congregation is considered healthy when it actively and responsibly addresses or heals its weaknesses and shortcomings. It is

¹ Ibid., 11.

² The Biotic Principles are discussed in more detail in chapter 3. Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 61-77.

³ Steinke, 4.

one that, even though it has problems, actively engages in the process of correcting and improving upon these identified shortcomings.⁴

Continuing with his systems approach to the church, Steinke suggests seven “health promoters” in the church. Though not actual quality characteristics in and of themselves, on a closer look, a church devoid of these qualities is either already sick, or will soon suffer from spiritual and developmental problems. These seven health promoters are:

1. Sense of purpose
2. Ability to appraise and manage conflict
3. Clarity of beliefs, direction, or responsibility
4. Mood and tone
5. Mature interaction
6. Healing capacities
7. A Focus on resources.

Like any living organism, when enjoying healthy and life-giving influences, the church will also grow and bring forth fruit for the honor and glory of God. The above health promoters are simply quality characteristics, positive influences that serve to strengthen the life and ministry of the church, thus allowing it to achieve its God—ordained purpose.

The book entitled *Growing a Healthy Church*, co-authored by Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, although written more for mobilizing a church to do effective evangelism, does offer some insight into their view of a healthy church culture. Speaking of a healthy environment for growth to occur in the church, which is what

church health is about, they mention six priorities or qualities in a church's life that will provide a solid environment for church growth. These are:

1. An Atmosphere of Love
2. An Active Relational Ministry
3. Communicating Christ Clearly
4. A Healthy Ministry Image
5. A Prayer Base
6. Communication of the Word.

We could add to this the implied but important role of church leadership to, as they say, “instigate, refine, and continually enhance the quality of these elements of ministry.”¹ The remainder of the book is focused on how to train and mobilize a church that already enjoys good body-health due to an atmosphere with the above-mentioned quality characteristics.

Looking at church health from yet a different perspective, George Hunter III presents a contemporary description of what a healthy church should look like. He calls these churches “apostolic churches.” Though he does not explicitly state that all healthy churches must necessarily fit his description of an apostolic church, he implies that in today's post-modern, post-Christian society, apostolic churches are the most likely and able to reach the lost for Christ. In other words, given our present cultural context, apostolic churches represent optimum health for this era.

Apostolic churches are defined as being churches that believe they have been “called” and/or “sent”—as the root word for apostle denotes—to reach the lost,

¹ Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 48-50.

unchurched, or pre-Christian population in their communities. They also are Christ centered in their theology and broader in their approach to dogmatics. Like the early apostles and the churches of the first century, these churches also adapt to the language and culture of contemporary culture so as to better communicate the gospel of Christ.¹

Hunter summarizes the distinctive features of a contemporary, healthy, and apostolic congregation by listing ten characteristics.² They are:

1. They have a redundant approach to rooting believers and seekers in Scripture.
2. They are disciplined and earnest in prayer.
3. They have a real compassion for lost, unchurched, pre-Christian people.
4. They obey the Great Commission as a privilege rather than duty.

Evangelism is not just one of many ministries in the church. It is central—all-encompassing.

5. They have a motivationally sufficient vision for what people, as disciples, can become.
6. They adapt to the language, music, and style of the target population's culture.
7. They labor to involve everyone, believers, and seekers in small groups.
8. They prioritize the involvement of all Christians in lay ministries for which they are gifted.

¹ George G. Hunter, *Church for the Unchurched* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 28.

² These characteristics, along with his overall understanding of what an apostolic church is, came from a thorough study of nine growing and contemporary congregations throughout the United States. *Ibid.*, 13.

9. Members receive regular pastoral care.

10. Members engage in many ministries to unchurched, non-Christian people.¹

Some of the above characteristics are new to this review. Nonetheless, one unique and insightful revelation that this list provides is number 5: that a healthy, apostolic church must give its members a clear vision of what being a disciple entails. In discussing this point, Hunter points out that most churches give their people one of ten goals for their membership, all of which Hunter feels are inadequate for true discipleship to take place. These traditional goals are: (1) be religious, (2) believe like us, (3) behave like us, (4) have an experience like ours, (5) become like us, (6) be good citizens, (7) share our politics, (8) support the institutional church, (9) prepare members for heaven, and (10) participation in the sacraments.²

A healthy church is made up of healthy members with a healthy sense of purpose and direction. When members are unclear on what being a disciple means and when the full implications of what it means to be a follower of Christ are blurry, then members and, by extension, the church can be easily distracted and lose their focus and mission.

In his inspiring book entitled *Reinventing Your Church*, Brian McLaren speaks to this issue as well. The goal of the church, he states, is to make more and better Christians. Conversion is not enough. Discipleship is also an imperative for a healthy church. Then he asks the question: “So what would a better Christian look like? What is the profile of the new Christian? This is something for every pastor

¹ Ibid., 29-32.

² Ibid., 37-41.

and serious Christian in this transition zone to lie awake at night struggling with and praying about.”¹

If what being a disciple of Christ entails has not been clearly defined, then it will be easy for both membership and leadership to offer contradictory and confusing descriptions. Furthermore, it also could be possible for members to feel that they had “arrived” as a disciple, when in actuality they are far from God’s intended destination for his children. Therefore, a clear vision and mission, combined with effective leadership, are all key ingredients to ensure that individual members are healthy parts of the body of Christ. Hunter’s emphasis on this characteristic is a worthy contribution to the topic of church health.

Another book worthy of mention in this literature review is Mark Dever’s book entitled *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. The book argues for a “new model for the church,”¹ a model where biblical faithfulness is central, a model that must stand against the rising anti-Christian tenor of modern society and culture. He calls for churches in which the key indicator of success is not found in measurable results but in “persevering biblical faithfulness.”

Though he does not suppose that his book covers all aspects of what constitutes a healthy church, he does put forth nine quality characteristics that he believes are being overlooked today, especially by churches that are increasingly concerned about numerical growth rather than about biblical faithfulness. The nine marks are:

1. Expository Preaching

¹ Brian D. McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 31-32.

2. Biblical Theology
3. Gospel Centered
4. A Biblical Understanding of Conversion
5. A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism
6. A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership
7. Biblical Church Discipline
8. A Concern for Discipleship and Growth
9. Biblical Church Leadership.

To conclude this review of books on this topic of church health, I will mention a book written by Waldo J. Werning entitled *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*. In this short work Werning highlights Natural Church Development's eight quality characteristics along with what he calls "four leading indicators of a healthy church"² as being the twelve central pillars of a healthy church. These pillars are:

1. Empowering Leadership
2. Gift-Oriented Ministry
3. Passionate Spirituality
4. Functional Structures
5. Inspiring Worship
6. Holistic Small Groups
7. Need-oriented Evangelism
8. Loving Relationships
9. Centrality of God's Word

¹ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 14.

² Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church* (Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1999), 19.

10. Mission and Vision-Driven

11. Biblical Financial Stewardship

12. Church Planting.

My purpose here is not to analyze and critique the above list of health-indicators. However, one could argue that some of the additions made to Schwartz's list could actually be included neatly into his original eight quality characteristics. The bold exception is with Church Planting. It is here that we find a real contribution to this topic. Werning argues that a healthy church should have a vision to reproduce itself by planting new churches, who themselves, from their beginning, understand the importance of reproducing themselves.¹ This principle of church multiplication, argues Werning, is a leading indicator of church health.

The preceding authors have contributed to the field of the Healthy Church by writing major books on the topic. However, a couple of journal articles are worthy of mention as well at this point. One of these was written by C. Peter Wagner in conjunction with Richard Gorsuch, who at the time was director of research and professor of psychology at Fuller Seminary. They administered an open-ended questionnaire to 134 pastors who were then currently enrolled at Fuller Seminary in the doctor of ministry program. Their responses led Wagner and Gorsuch to publish a list of thirteen characteristics of a healthy church, which are listed below in order of importance as ranked by those who filled out the questionnaires:²

1. Bible Knowledge

¹ Ibid., 60.

² C. Peter Wagner and Richard L. Gorsuch, "The Quality Church (Part 1)," *Leadership* (Winter 1983): 29-30.

2. Personal Devotions
3. Worship
4. Witnessing
5. Lay Ministry
6. Missions
7. Giving
8. Fellowship
9. Distinctive Lifestyle
10. Attitude Towards Religion
11. Social Service
12. Membership Growth
13. Social Justice.

In reflecting on their conclusions the authors later suggested, and rightly so, that membership growth should not be a part of any formal evaluation instrument to determine church quality as it primarily measures quantitative variables which are by-products of church health.

Another article worth noting, especially due to its direct application to our fast-changing and shrinking world, is that written by Walt Kallestad and entitled, “How We Are Building a Church of the 21st Century: 7 Distinguishing Characteristics of a Dynamic 21st Century Church.”¹ In this article packed with a zeal for seizing the future for the glory of the Kingdom of God, Kallestad outlines what he

¹ Walt Kallestad, “How We Are Building a Church of the 21st Century: 7 Distinguishing Characteristics of a Dynamic 21st Century Church,” *Strategies for Today's Leader* (Fall 1999): 21-25.

believes should characterize the healthy church in the context of a growingly secular and unchurched American landscape. These characteristics are:

1. Entrepreneurial Mission-Minded Leadership
2. Creative Financing
3. Wise Use of Leading Technology
4. Building Rewarding Relationships
5. Strategic Community Orientation
6. A “Glocal” Behavior (Thinking globally but acting locally)
7. A Burning Passion for Jesus Christ.

His call is for a church willing and eager to change and adapt to a culture and world in flux, all for the sake of the Kingdom of God. This sense of anticipation of God’s ordained possibilities for the future is fleshed out in the life of the church in the seven characteristics he mentions. The truth is, he writes, “the best days are not behind us. They are ahead of us. Now, as we move ahead into the 21st Century, let’s agree to use the past as a rudder not an anchor.”¹

In conclusion, there is one author who is conspicuously absent from this review of literature, and that is Christian Schwarz and his book entitled *Natural Church Development*. I have reserved chapter 3 for a detailed review and analysis of his work using the criteria listed in the previous section as a point of reference for the review. I also discuss the NCD paradigm from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective to see if it fits with our church’s theological perspective.²

¹ Ibid. 21.

² Up to this point we have reviewed only what individual authors view as a healthy church. However, denominations have also tried to set forth criteria that would constitute healthy church growth. The North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist church has outlined four factors by which to measure growth and they are: Membership, Baptisms, Involvement in Mission,

Criteria for Evaluation

As these various authors are reviewed it becomes clear that some major themes have emerged.¹ First, congregational health primarily deals with the presence of certain qualitative factors. Rarely, if ever, do we see these factors been evaluated in an objective fashion in order to define a baseline for church health. However, quality does lead to quantity. When the church is healthy, growth will happen all by itself.²

It must be pointed out though, that quantity does not necessarily presuppose good congregational health. There can be occasions that, due to effective and magnetic leadership and/or the presence of some other socioeconomic or cultural factors, a church could experience quick and phenomenal growth. However, its ability to sustain this growth, fold in the new believers, and mobilize them for effective ministry is compromised due to the church's poor congregational health.

Second, we could say that church health is a systemic matter. It does not deal with external matters, per se. Church health is a "big picture" item. The Body is the focus, not the individual member nor any given particular ministry. Too often when church growth is desired, it is easy to resort to quick fixes, to resort to nifty programs that have "worked" elsewhere, or to sure-fire ministries that will help the church grow

and Tithes and Offerings. See North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, "Year-end Meeting Report," 1999.

¹ For a chart comparing all the different quality characteristics of a healthy church as put forth by the authors reviewed in this study, please see Table 2.

² In a recent article in *Ministry* magazine research was cited which said that 85% of churches which aggressively addressed their weakest area of congregational health experience both qualitative as well as numerical growth within one year. John Grys and Greg Schaller, "Growing a Healthy Church (part 1)," *Ministry*, January 2001, 9.

TABLE 2

QUALITIES IN A HEALTHY CHURCH:
A COMPARISON OF VARIOUS AUTHOR SUGGESTIONS

Author	Mark Dever (2000)	George Hunter, III (1996)	Stephen Macchia (1999)	Christian Schwarz (1996)	Wagner & Gorsuch (1983)	Shawchuck & Rath (1994)	C. Peter Wagner (1985)	C. Peter Wagner (1996)	Waldo Werning (1999)
1	Expositional Preaching	Plan for Discipleship	God's Empowering Presence	Empowering Leadership	Membership Growth	Religious Qualities	Visionary Pastoral Leadership	Philosophy of Ministry	Empowerin g Leadership
2	Biblical Theology	Earnest in Prayer	God-Exalting Worship	Gift-Oriented Ministry	Lay Ministry	Lay-led Qualities	Mobilized Laity	Pastoral Leadership	Gift- Oriented Ministry
3	The Gospel	Compassion for Lost	Spiritual Disciplines	Passionate Spirituality	Personal Devotions	Gathering Qualities	Able to Meet Community Needs	Biblical Convictions	Passionate Spirituality
4	Biblical View of Conversion	Evangelism is Central	Learning and Growing in Community	Functional Structures	Social Service	Participative Qualities	Celebration, Congregation and Cells	Piety & Spiritual Formation	Functional Structures
5	Biblical View of Evangelism	Clear Vision of Believer	Loving Relationships	Inspiring Worship	Worship	Outside-In Qualities	Targeted Mission Focus	Spiritual Gifts	Inspiring Worship
6	Biblical View of Church Membership	Adaptable to Culture	Servant- Leadership Development	Holistic Small Groups	Attitude to Religion	Expecting Qualities	Proven Evangelistic Methods	Fellowship Structures	Multiplied Small Groups
7	Biblical Church Discipline	Small Groups	Outward Focus	Need-oriented Evangelism	Witnessing	Consequent Qualities	Priorities in Order	Meaningful Worship	Fruitful Evangelism
8	Concern for Discipleship and Growth	Gift-oriented Ministry	Administration , Accountability	Loving Relationships	Fellowship			Vision for the World	Loving Relationshi p
9	Biblical Church Leadership	Members Receive Pastoral Care	Networking with the Body		Bible Knowledge				Centrality of God's Word
10		Many Ministries to Unchurched	Stewardship and Generosity		Missions				Mission and Vision Driven
11					Giving				Biblical Financial Stewardship
12					Distinctive Lifestyle				Church Planting
					Social Justice				

more effectively. This view of the church is like dealing with the problem of excessive weight by just going on a diet for a week. After the week is over, old eating and lifestyle factors remain, and within a week or two so do those undesirable pounds. When we deal effectively with the issue of quality, we actually eliminate the barriers for growth. We release the growth potential already inherent in a healthy congregation.¹

Third, God desires quality. He wants and expects His Body to be healthy. The biblical study presented in the first section of this chapter shows this to be true. All members of the Body of Christ are to be involved in ministry for the Head. Unity pervades all endeavors and is accomplished by the centrality and kingship of the Head, which is Jesus Christ.

Fourth, growth is an expected outcome. Continual growth is the norm, not for growth's sake, but for the glory of Christ. And since church health is pursued for the purpose of giving glory to Christ, then "glory" and "ordinary" are opposites.² All that is undertaken is done with a view to excellence as well as with a view to honor and glorify the head of the church—Jesus Christ. Ordinary ministries, ordinary worship, ordinary leadership do not measure up—since all that is done in the church is for the glory of none other than the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ.

Fifth, the intrinsic quality characteristics of a healthy church that are found in most of the literature reviewed speak of the importance of effective and empowering church leadership. A healthy church includes spiritual passion and formation. It includes small groups, a strategy for discipleship, including a clear picture of what a

¹ Shawchuck and Rath, 18-20.

² John Miller, 67.

disciple is expected to “look” like. It includes programs and structures that are functional and focused on achieving a church’s stated mission. It also includes an effective model of evangelism, tailored to reach the church’s stated target audience.

Hudson Taylor, that long-time missionary and servant of God, summarized this healthy church paradigm and its effects in terms of church growth by simply stating, “God’s work in God’s way will gain God’s supply.”¹ The church was created to accomplish God’s work. The church has been given a manual and living instructor in the form of the Bible and the Holy Spirit to educate, lead, and empower the church in how to do ministry in God’s way. When these two factors are married and effectively executed, God’s supply will follow. The harvest will be reached. The Kingdom will finally come in all its eschatological fullness and glory.

¹ Werning, 8.

CHAPTER 3

EVALUATION OF THE NATURAL CHURCH
DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

Introduction

The desire of sincere clergy and laity alike has always been for the church to grow and experience vibrant congregational health. There has always been a longing among church leadership for the simple and untainted growth which the early church experienced and which is so clearly described in Acts when the historian states that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Out of this thirst for growth has emerged a potent and well-articulated discipline called Church Growth. Its proponents research, analyze, synthesize, and hypothesize what principles and programs are essential for a church to practice and experience in order for it to enjoy consistent and effective church growth. However, a number of critics have also spoken out against the movement for what they see as an overly “scientific” and “test-tube” approach to church life. These critics care about growth, but they feel that the emphasis in most church growth literature is too technical and people centered, rather than God centered.

In 1996 Christian Schwarz entered this discussion with a church growth paradigm that he called Natural Church Development. In the book by the same name

he sets forth what he calls “a different approach to church growth.”¹ For him, growth should take place all by itself. Naturally. God has placed in the church—His Living Body—certain growth automatisms which, when nurtured and left unhindered, will produce growth naturally and spontaneously. He calls these growth automatisms church growth principles—principles that are true irrespective of time, place, culture, education, or political orientation.

In his groundbreaking book Schwarz describes the expensive and far-reaching study he and his colleagues entered upon in order to discover not only what these principles were, but also how to measure the presence of these qualitative elements in any given church. The first study he undertook was conducted between 1991-1993 and comprised an initial sample of 334 respondents from 14 German churches. Later this was expanded to 201 German churches and 3,624 respondents.

Finally, the data of altogether 1,188 churches in 32 countries on five continents was analyzed by Schwarz and his team, all of this with a view to discover what universal principles for church growth exist.² In his words, the research that was conducted provides “the first worldwide scientifically verifiable answer to the question, “What church growth principles are true, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?”³

The principles discovered as a result of this major research project are qualitative in nature. They have to do with the forest, not the trees, with the soil in

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 7.

² Christoph Schalk, *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches: The Statistical Development of the “Natural Church Development” Survey and Its Relation to Organizational Psychology* (Würzburg, Germany: Christoph Schalk, 1999), 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 19.

which the church will grow, rather than on what fertilizer, type of plant or watering schedule yields the best results. The principles discovered are described by Schwarz in what he calls the eight quality characteristics of a healthy church.

Once the core principles or quality characteristics of a healthy church were proven through the extensive study described above, Schwarz—in collaboration with his colleague Christoph Schalk—then set out to provide individual churches with a survey instrument which they could use to assess their own qualitative health. It is here that the hypothesis, tested and proven in over 1000 churches, was then developed into a practical, cross-cultural tool for church health diagnosis.¹

The usefulness and desirability of this kind of instrument was highlighted in an article dealing with church quality written by C. Peter Wagner and Richard L.

Gorsuch in 1983, and they quoted George Gallup:

What is needed is a whole new set of measurements in addition to those we now have, which measure primarily religious involvement or participation. We need to probe beneath external religiosity to the bedrock of spiritual commitment.” We would add that these measurements need to be taken on congregations as well as on individuals. Our objective, then, is to produce a

¹ It is interesting to note that Paul Beasley-Murray and Alan Wilkinson, in their book entitled *Turning the Tide* published in 1981, did much the same thing as did Schwarz—though on a much smaller scale. Using the Seven Vital Signs of a healthy church as outlined by C. Peter Wagner in a book by the same name, they surveyed 330 Baptist churches in England with a view to diagnosing their congregational health.

Of interest also is the work done by Rob Lebow and William L. Simon and published in their book entitled *Lasting Change* (New York, NY: VNR Publishing Company, 1997). Their particular concern was how to create a healthy work environment that would help people play at the “top of their game” (xxv). They discovered a research project conducted by the University of Chicago in which 17 million surveys were analyzed from 40 countries dealing with what characteristics they felt would help create an environment of productivity and creativity in the work place. The result was what Lebow and Simon call the Eight Shared Values of the Heroic Work Environment. These values are: Truth: Treat others with uncompromising truth; Trust: Lavish trust on your associates; Mentoring: Mentor unselfishly; Openness: Be receptive to new ideas; Risk-taking: Take personal risks for the good of the organization; Giving credit: Give credit where it’s due; Honesty: Be honest in all dealing; do not touch dishonest dollars; Caring: Put the interests of others before your own.

With these values clearly identified, they then developed a survey instrument where they could enter any work place, assess their Heroic Value quotient, and work with leadership on a strategic plan to strengthen areas of weakness.

manual measuring scale (no computer needed) for church quality that will work interdenominationally and internationally.¹

Schwarz has developed just such an instrument (computer needed).

Statistically valid and easy to administer it allows for any congregation to discover their church health in relation to the eight qualitative characteristics described by the Natural Church Development study.

The purpose of this chapter is neither to analyze the statistical methodology used in determining the Eight Quality Characteristics, nor to study the validity of the diagnostic instrument. These will be assumed to be both valid and accurate.² The purpose of this chapter is to look at the theological framework of the Natural Church Development paradigm and the Eight Quality Characteristics with a view to ascertain their validity from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective as well as from the literature available on the subject.

Theological Framework

The Natural Church Development paradigm has its theological foundation in what Schwarz calls a “bipolar theology” or a “bipolar paradigm.”³ Simply put,

¹ Wagner and Gorsuch, 29-30.

² The statistical validity of the development of the NCD survey is described in Christoph Shalk's work entitled *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches: The Statistical Development of the Natural Church Development Survey and Its Relation to Organizational Psychology*. The paper explains in detail the research methodology that was followed and its careful work to adhere to strict research standards.

A critique of NCD and its statistical methodology was written in the form of a book review by John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley, “Natural Church Development,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*, Spring, 1999, 83-92. In a rebuttal to their scathing critique written by David Wetzler, the NCD publisher in the United States, Wetzler points out that the reviewers did not go to the trouble of reading Schalk's paper on the research methods used in developing the NCD survey instrument. David Wetzler, “A Response to John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley,” *Journal of the American Society for Church Growth*, Fall 1999, 83-87.

³ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 94-95.

Schwarz contends that the church of Christ is made up of two poles. One he calls the dynamic pole. The other he calls the static pole. The dynamic pole is organic in nature. It is the “alive” part of the church. It is what facilitates growth. It is the biotic facet of the living church.

The static pole, on the other hand, is the technical, organizational, man-made dimension of the church.¹ Biblically speaking, this bipolar church concept can be seen in 1 Pet 2:5 when the church is described as being “living . . . stones.” In this verse one can see both the physical, man-made aspect, as well as the organic, living dimension of the church. 1 Cor 3:9 also alludes to this when it says that the church is both “God’s field and . . . God’s building.”²

Both poles must exist for a church to be healthy. There must be a natural interplay between them. The Dynamic Pole naturally produces the static pole, while the Static Pole naturally should stimulate and promote the Dynamic Pole. They exist in a symbiotic relationship and both are equally valuable. They both have a role to play in the overall health of the church.

However, as the term “pole” suggests, both poles intrinsically will pull resources to themselves—even if it means totally ignoring the other pole. Thus, in many churches, Schwarz sees not a Bipolar Paradigm at work, but rather an overemphasis on one or the other of these two poles, which in turn brings about disease to the church, which then also handicaps its efforts to grow.

¹ Christian Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 16.

² See also Eph 2:21 and 4:12.

To summarize this bipolar ecclesiological paradigm, we could say that in order for the church to be healthy it must function biotically. For it to function biotically, both the static and dynamic poles must be nurtured, valued, and protected. If we emphasize that which we can control (the static pole) to the exclusion of the dynamic pole (that which happens all by itself), then we are not functioning as an organism. As Schwarz says: “The church as an organization can be ‘manufactured’ by humans; the church as an organism cannot. We can have control over the organization, but never over the organism.”¹ That responsibility has always and will always be the work and function of Christ – the Head of the church.

It is in the context of this bipolar theology that Schwarz succinctly outlines the main thesis of the Natural Church Development paradigm. He states:

In natural church development, all we can do—to present my thesis briefly from the outset—is subject the elements we *can* influence to the criterion of functionality in such a way that the elements that are beyond our control may take place. We do not make them; rather they happen “all by themselves.”²

An overemphasis or blatant disregard for one pole or the other causes problems for the church. An exaggerated emphasis on the static pole results in Monistic objectivism, or what Schwarz will most often call the “institutionalistic paradigm.” An overemphasis on the dynamic pole will result in dualistic subjectivism, or what he terms the “spiritualistic paradigm.”³

¹ Ibid., 21.

² Ibid.

³ This spiritualistic paradigm should not be confused with the idea of “spiritualism” with all its demonic activity. The Spiritualistic paradigm which Schwarz objects to is an overemphasis and over dependence on the miraculous work of God to the exclusion of the biblically outlined role that man is to play in the Great Commission as well as daily leadership of the church.

It is Schwarz's opinion that almost all major conflicts in church history, even the controversial issues that face the church today, can be explained as a struggle between "monism and dualism, objectivism and subjectivism, heteronomism and autonomism, between technocracy and spiritualism."¹ The relativist has a problem with the dogmatic person. The individualist has a problem with the person espousing a strong role for the organized church.

The alternative to both these extremes is found, suggests Schwarz, in Paul Tillich's wonderfully accurate phrase, "theonomy." "In heteronomism, as we have seen, there is danger that the institution takes the place of God; in autonomism it is the individual. But a theologically legitimate paradigm would be one in which God takes the place that is due to him."²

Other authors agree with this perspective. Brian McLaren talks about the dangers of an "anarchist ecclesiology." This is a viewpoint that believes the "institutional church" has nothing good to offer and is, in some cases, evil, and that the true church, the healthy church, will be blissfully spontaneous, filled with the Holy Spirit and unrestrained by policies, committees, or any serious organization.³

In his engaging book on church health entitled *The Healthy Church*, C. Peter Wagner refers to a common disease afflicting the church, which he calls "koinonitis."⁴ This disease is characterized by an overemphasis on the relational and

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 94.

² Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 48.

³ McLaren, 96.

⁴ Wagner, *The Healthy Church*, 93-94.

spiritual qualities of church life (the dynamic pole) to the detriment of organized efforts to grow the church beyond the circle of those already in the “family.”

At the beginning of Seventh-day Adventist church history there was also some tension between these two theological poles. There was wide disagreement regarding what role, if any, formal organization and institutions should play in the life of the church. For many years the “anarchists” prevailed. However, as the church grew, so did the need to provide for the ministry, support for local and foreign missions, and the publishing work. Finally, in 1863, the church was organized. However, forty years after the fact, there were still tensions between both poles in the church. Ellen White alludes to this polarizing influence when she states:

I learn that it is proposed by some of our brethren to do away with the organization of some at least of the branches of our work. No doubt what has led them to propose this step is that in some of our organizations the machinery has been made so complicated as really to hinder the work. This, however, is not an argument against organization, but against the perversion of it.¹

Ellen White seems to agree with Schwarz’s bipolar view of the church when she underlines the role of both human effort and the enabling power of the Spirit. In this brief quote taken from the book *Evangelism* she not only outlines the two “poles” that must be actively nurtured in the church, but she also states that in the church God works according to great principles which I believe can be understood as encompassing principles like the eight quality characteristics as well as the biotic principles referred to later in this chapter. She writes:

God works according to great principles which He has presented to the human family, and it is our part to mature wise plans, and to set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results.¹

¹ Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1893.

God designed that organized effort should cooperate with the Holy Spirit, remembering always that it is His power which does the work.²

I believe most theologians and church members alike would agree that the poles as described by Schwarz exist. Even the theological framework of a bipolar ecclesiological framework in which the church should exist makes sense. The issue that can be raised with Schwarz's bipolar argument is that to him it becomes the theological measuring stick for all theological and methodological issues in the church. This, in my opinion, forces him to stretch complex issues too far in order to fit them into his particular paradigm.

In all fairness, Schwarz does make a qualifying statement in which he states that many of the issues being discussed (such as liturgical tensions, doctrinal tensions, definitions, denominational agendas, etc.) are to be understood in general terms.³ At the same time, I believe that a simple approach to the bipolar theological paradigm would be more helpful to all but the most erudite theologians.

Simply put, we could understand the two poles by describing them in terms of a marriage. For a marriage to exist and thrive there must be both communication and organization. There must be both friendship and work. There must be intimacy and responsibility. In short, we could also describe this bipolar framework by quoting the words of Jesus when He states that true and effective worship and service to God

¹ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1964), 653.

² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1946), 362.

³ Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 31.

should be accomplished both in “spirit and truth.”¹ Both subjective and objective elements should be valued and nurtured.

In conclusion, we could say that Schwarz’s focus on this bipolar view of ecclesiology answers the question as to *why* a natural development approach to church health is important and viable.

Eight Quality Characteristics

Having answered the “why” of Natural Church Development, let us turn our attention to the “what.” Schwarz discovered and proved that in growing churches the world over, there are eight quality characteristics that all of them have in common.² Are these quality characteristics theologically sound from an SDA point of view? Are they validated by the work and experience of others in the field of church growth and pastoral practice?³ The following review will help answer these questions.

Empowering Leadership

Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering their members for ministry. They do not think of people in the church as their “helpers” in attaining their personal goals. Rather, “they invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader

¹ John 4:24.

² For a comprehensive review of the literature dealing with this topic the reader should refer to chapter 2 above.

³ For a chart comparing each of the eight quality characteristics with the healthy church paradigms put forth by other authors, please refer to Table 3. In this table you will find that I have taken the liberty to fold certain suggested factors into the eight quality characteristics. Those that could not logically fit are listed separately. One example will probably require a note of explanation. A number of authors have suggested that a congregation’s faithfulness with its stewardship of time and finances is a telling health factor for any congregation. However, I believe that this quality characteristic can be easily folded into Schwarz’s Passionate Spirituality factor in that a total and passionate commitment to Christ also entails a passionate commitment to follow and observe his commandments—including the command to return a faithful tithe and give a liberal offering.

TABLE 3

QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH:
A COMPARISON OF OTHER PARADIGMS WITH THAT OF NCD

Author	Christian Schwarz	Mark Dever	George Hunter, III	Stephen Macchia	Gorsuch & Wagner	Shawchuck & Rath	C. Peter Wagner (1985)	C. Peter Wagner (1996)	Waldo Werming
1	Empowering Leadership	Biblical Church Leadership	Plans for Discipleship Pastoral Care	Wise Administration & Accountability			Visionary Pastoral Leadership	Pastoral Leadership	Empowering Leadership
2	Gift-Oriented Ministry	Biblical View of Membership	Gift-oriented Ministry	Servant-Leadership Development	Lay Ministry	Lay-led Qualities	Mobilized Laity	Spiritual Gifts	Gift-Oriented Ministry
3	Passionate Spirituality	-Concern for Discipleship and Growth -Biblical Theology -Biblical View of Conversion -The Gospel	Earnest in Prayer	-God's Empowering Presence -Spiritual Disciplines -Stewardship and Generosity	-Personal Devotions -Attitude to Religion -Bible Knowledge -Giving -Distinctive Lifestyle	Religious Qualities		-Piety and Spiritual Formation -Biblical Convictions	-Passionate Spirituality -Biblical Financial Stewardship -Centrality of God's Word
4	Functional Structures		Clear Vision Evangelism is Central			Gathering Qualities	Targeted Mission Focus	Philosophy of Ministry	- Functional Structure - Mission & Vision Driven
5	Inspiring Worship		Adaptable to Culture	God-Exalting Worship	Worship			Meaningful Worship	Inspiring Worship
6	Holistic Small Groups		Small Groups	Learning and Growing in Community			Celebration, Congregation and Cells	Fellowship Structures	Multiplied Small Groups
7	Need-oriented Evangelism	Biblical View of Evangelism	-Compassion for Lost -Ministries to Unchurched	Outward Focus	Witnessing Missions	Outside-In Qualities	-Able to Meet Community Needs -Proven Methods	Vision for the World	Fruitful Evangelism
8	Loving Relationships			Loving Relationships	Fellowship	Participative Qualities	Priorities in Order		Loving Relationships
Other		Expositional Preaching		Networking with the Body	Membership Growth	Expecting Qualities			Centrality of God's Word
		Biblical Church Discipline			Social Justice Social Service	Consequent Qualities			Church Planting

assists Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them.”¹ Effective leaders in the church invest the majority of their time in discipling, training, and empowering their members. As Schwarz says, the pastor operating as an empowering leader operates “less like that of a shepherd of sheep, and more like that of the trainer of a team.”²

Schwarz maintains that the empowering leader operates effectively both in the static and dynamic pole of the church. Pastors, he maintains, are both “goal and relationship oriented.”³ The well-known author on the topic of leadership, John Maxwell, illustrates this leadership principle when he states that “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”⁴ Moreover, “effective leaders know that you have to touch people’s hearts before you ask them for a hand. . . . You can’t move people to action unless you first move them with emotion. The heart comes before the head.”⁵ Both the cognitive and the emotional aspects of the mind must be operating well in order for a leader to be truly effective.

The biblical foundation for this view of leadership is found in Eph 4:11-12 where Paul states:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teacher, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

And also in 2 Tim 2:2:

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22.

² Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 187.

³ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁴ John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 102.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Paul outlines a clear role for Timothy, and by extension, for all church leaders. They must ensure leadership multiplication. They must unselfishly give authority to those in the church—all the time training them and guiding them to use it for the building up of the Kingdom of God. Admiral James B. Stockdale, a one-time vice-presidential candidate, echoed this philosophy when he said, “Great leaders gain authority by giving it away.”¹

Too often leaders operate within a totally different paradigm. Authority is hoarded and used to push and at times frighten people into doing the will of the leader. When that style of leadership is used, the opposite of the desired result usually happens. Followers feel used. They are resentful of their lack of say-so in the organization. The reality is that only people that are empowered can reach their potential. Maxwell states it this way: “The People’s capacity to achieve is determined by their leader’s ability to empower.”² The apostle Paul would totally agree. So does Schwarz. Growing churches, the world over, are practicing an empowering style of leadership. They are more concerned about the “job” getting done, than who gets the credit, or who is sitting behind the wheel at the end of the race.

In George Barna’s insightful book entitled *User Friendly Churches*, he points out that his research has shown again and again that leaders of growing churches are

¹ Ibid., 128.

² Ibid., 126.

not afraid to delegate responsibility. In fact, “they perceive delegation as a means to an end: it was a way to empower other people to do ministry.”¹

C. John Miller sums up the role of effective pastoral leadership when he states that the work of the pastor as understood from the New Testament consists of two elements: First, the pastor is to teach God’s people the gospel. Second, the pastor trains them to use their God-given spiritual gifts in ministry for the Lord.² When the pastor wanders from this work and trust, the ministry of the local church is hindered because most, if not all, of the decisions and work are being done by one person—the pastor. The pastor becomes the bottleneck for growth. The pastor becomes the rate-determining step for church development.

It is for this reason that this principle of a healthy church is so pivotal and important. If the God-ordained leader in a church is leading in the wrong spirit and method, the whole church suffers.³ It is no wonder that Gary L. McIntosh, commenting on the role of pastoral leadership in the local church, could write that second only to the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, “pastoral leadership is the most determinative factor in growing churches.”⁴

¹ George Barna, *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 147.

² C. John Miller, 142.

³ At its 1994 year-end meeting, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists voted to commission a study to look into what makes a pastor effective. They studied a cross-section of 100 pastors over a period of years. The results are interesting, as they once again highlight the importance of effective leadership in the church. They found that effective pastors, or pastors of growing churches, are intentional about soul winning, do not try to do the work alone, but have a high lay-involvement philosophy, have received practical training in public and personal evangelism, are forward looking, lead the congregation in establishing a wide variety of ministries to meet various needs, generate a climate of care and fellowship within the congregation, and lead the congregation to make the physical plant attractive and appealing. Roger L. Dudley and H. Peter Swanson, “What Makes a Pastor Effective,” *Ministry*, December 2000, 26-29.

⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn’t Fit All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 67-68.

Ellen White adds her voice by stating:

The plans which have been suggested by our brother, I believe to be sound; and if we practice something in this line in the several churches with which we are connected, we shall find that those churches that carry out a system of labor, educating and training all to do something for the Master, will be living churches; for a working church is a living church.¹

In an even more clear statement of her understanding of the role of the pastor and church member she states:

Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church, thus wearying themselves and preventing others from performing their duty. They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.²

Gift-oriented Ministry

Connected with the aforementioned principle of empowering leadership is also this quality characteristic of a membership, trained and equipped for service based on their God-given spiritual gifts. This principle is based on the fact—which research has borne out—that when Christians serve “in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit.”³

In short, this principle is the fleshing out of the reformation dictum of the “priesthood of all believers.”⁴ Gifted through the indwelling Christ, led by empowering leaders from God, the believer is freed to truly buildup the Body of

¹ Ellen G. White, “The Missionary Work,” *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 6 November 1888, 259.

² Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 291.

³ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Christ. Too often the total opposite is practiced in our churches today. The leader decides that a certain “ministry” needs to be performed. The leader then sets out to recruit the “right” person for the job. Often this person is working outside his or her area of giftedness and the end result is the failure of the ministry, the frustration of the leader, and, worst of all, the discouragement of another church member.

In growing churches around the world Schwarz found that members were active in ministry in the area of their giftedness. When that took place, ministries flourished and members were happy. Morale was palpably energetic. Optimism permeated the atmosphere.¹ This principle of a gift-oriented ministry is based on solid biblical ground. 1 Pet 4:10 says: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Again, in 1 Cor 12:28 Paul says: “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administration, varieties of tongues.”

Ellen White echoes this biblical theme:

The greatest cause of our spiritual feebleness as a people is the lack of real faith in spiritual gifts. If they all received this kind of testimony in full faith, they would put from them those things which displease God, and would everywhere stand in union and in strength. And three-fourths of the ministerial labor now expended to help the churches could then be spared to the work of raising up churches in new fields.²

¹ It is also interesting to note that research has shown that the percentage of members who use their spiritual gifts in active ministry in the church is much higher in smaller congregations. In churches with an attendance of under 100, 31% of members are using their spiritual gifts. In churches with a weekly attendance of over 1,000, this number drops to 17%. *Signs of the Times*, January 2001, 4.

² Ellen G. White, “An Appeal to the Friends of Truth,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 14 January 1868, 1.

And in a clear indication that the distribution of spiritual gifts is the sole work of God and not that of man, Ellen White writes:

Let the hand of God work the clay for His own service. He knows just what kind of vessel He wants. To every man He has given his work. God knows what place he is best fitted for. Many are working contrary to the will of God, and they spoil the web.¹

Every member of the Body of Christ is needed. When one is missing, hurt, or unable to perform one's God-ordained task, the mission of the church suffers. Every function of the body of Christ has a member, called and gifted by God, to perform it.² This fact, when fully realized by a congregation, can create a sense of hope, anticipation, and energy, which the Reformation call of the "priesthood of all believers" was intended to set in motion.

Passionate Spirituality

Research conducted on growing churches also discovered that church development happened more naturally where the members were "on fire" for Christ and His church. In churches where members pray, study the Bible, and are excited about living out the principles they learn in everyday life, growth happens all by itself. Interestingly enough, orthodoxy was not found to be a major indicator for growth. Why? As Schwarz puts it, "any church, however orthodox its doctrine and its view of the Bible may be, can hardly expect to grow if it does not learn to live its faith with passion."³

¹ Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 65.

² C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994).

³ Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 124-125.

This is why Jesus encourages His disciples to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). This is why Ellen White also writes:

Sanctification through the Holy Spirit binds up man’s will and purpose with the will and purpose of God. If we have not these features in our experience, the church will be sickly and feeble.¹

A healthy church is composed of healthy members, of men and women who have a personal experience in true godliness.²

The church is, at its foundation, a spiritual entity. Despite its committees, its brick and mortar edifices, and yearly budgets, at the core the church is about a community of believers living in fellowship and communion with God. This fact is often forgotten or overlooked. Much attention is placed on ministry and the proper execution of it. However, a healthy church does not forget that “ministry is service in the name of the Lord. Spirituality is attention to the life of the Spirit in us.”³ When we ignore this vital aspect of congregational life, we are ensuring eventual spiritual depletion. For as Shawchuck and Rath point out, “ministry consumes energy. Spirituality restores energy.”⁴

In a similar, though more limited, study conducted by Stephen Macchia in New England, Macchia discovered that God’s Empowering Presence was one of what he called the ten essential characteristics of a healthy church.⁵ Again and again, book

¹ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 13:191.

² Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character and Personality*, 710.

³ Shawchuck and Rath, 14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Macchia, 27.

after book reveals a direct correlation between spiritual fervor and congregational health. Where the Lord is present, so is health.

If this is the case, then spirituality must not be taken for granted as something that will just happen. If the spiritual life in the congregation is so important, then, as Shawchuck and Rath point out that it must be “defined, nurtured, and attended.”¹ In fact, they recommend some diagnostic questions to help evaluate the spiritual health in a congregation. These questions are:

1. Do the congregation’s leaders publicly witness to their own spiritual journey?
2. Do the congregation’s leaders teach members the dynamics and disciplines of the spiritual life?
3. Does the congregation create, develop, and support opportunities for members’ spiritual renewal?
4. Does the congregation publicly witness to its spirituality?
5. Is personal witnessing occurring?²

When these and other questions are consciously answered positively in the daily life of a congregation, Schwarz would say, that growth—both qualitative and quantitative—will naturally follow, all by itself. When this does not happen, spiritual apathy sets in and the whole body loses its appeal to those outside the church. Tragically, in the opinion of George Barna, this is by and large what has happened in the churches all across America. The life of Christ, in the church, makes little to no difference in everyday life. Christians and non-Christians are, for most practical

¹ Shawchuck and Rath, 27.

² Ibid., 27-28.

purposes, indistinguishable.¹ Passionate spirituality in the daily life of a Christian is attractive because Christ is the valued center of all that they do. And Christ, when lifted up before men, cannot but draw all men unto Himself.

Functional Structures

It is precisely in the area of functional structures that growing and declining churches differ the most.² My experience in coaching churches and in studying churches that have taken the Natural Church development survey also validates this fact. But it is also clear that this characteristic of a healthy church is often grossly misunderstood.

To define functional structures as merely a collection of smooth-operating organizational structures, or a well-administered group of programs, or efficiently chaired committees is to miss the heart of the issue. Functional structures have more to do with vision, direction, teamwork, and purpose than anything else.

In fact, even the mention of this principle of church growth often elicits discomfort and confrontation. Viewing the issue from the previously mentioned bipolar vantage point, the spiritualistic oriented member sees nothing “spiritual” or “god-like” in structures. They are man-made, and often abused by man. On the other hand, the traditionalist, always ready to defend and conserve the heritage of the church will be uncomfortable with the “functional” part of the equation.

¹ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 6.

² Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 94.

The balance is found in the mean. Functional structures are just that—functional, useful. “It doesn’t matter how many or how few structures a church has, or whether its structures are old or new, but the criterion is how useful they are in a specific situation.”¹ It is not that this principle is merely pragmatic in nature—it is also theological. Christ’s teaching on the Sabbath bears this out. Speaking to a congregation that had abused and forgotten the function and true meaning of the Sabbath he said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The point of this comment was that when the purpose and function of a structure, or even a commandment, are forgotten, or worse, ignored, then it becomes theologically meaningless.

The same can be said of structures. When methods become sacred due to their historical legacy or perhaps even due to their past success, they will rarely, if ever, truly get evaluated. They become what Dan Southerland calls “ecclesiastical ruts.”²

For this reason I agree with Schwarz when he contends that structures are never neutral. Structures can be helpful for church development, or they can detract from it.³ When they are practiced out of respect for tradition alone, with no view to clearly delineated objectives and devoid of any background of purpose or values, then church structures are hindrances to total congregational health. Scripture’s admonition to do all things decently and in order is meaningless if what is done is

¹ Ibid., 159.

² Southerland, 161.

³ Ibid., 94.

devoid of direction and purpose. Without purpose and direction, then as Paul said, we are merely boxing with thin air.

Tragically, research has shown that this kind of directionless leadership is prevalent in churches all across America. In a study conducted by George Barna it was discovered that only one out every ten senior pastors is able to articulate what he believes God's vision and direction are for the church he is leading.¹

In an attempt to deal with this epidemic problem, Schwarz recommends that truly functional structures should always have three common elements:

First of all, all structural efforts are directed towards clearly formulated church guidelines ("philosophy of ministry"). Second, all "successful" structures concentrate on the specific focus as defined in the philosophy of ministry, which includes the willingness to eliminate all that is not useful. Third, the structures of growing churches are almost entirely multiplication structures, that is, they are not geared to additive growth (which at some point comes up against natural limits), but rather on the ongoing multiplication of the work.²

One example of this kind of purpose-driven structural mind-set is that described by William Easum as "permission-giving" structures. These kinds of structures will not be asking the question, "How can our structures control the church," but rather they will ask, "How can they be a catalytic force for the growth of the Kingdom?"³ However, to be catalytic, a structure must exist in order to achieve a clearly defined mission. Snowshoes are structures that help the hunter move swiftly over the snow in pursuit of his prey. Snowshoes will not work as water-skis. They just are not the proper equipment for the job.

¹ Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church*, 36.

² Ibid., 160.

³ McLaren, 106.

In Peter Steinke's thoughtful book entitled, *Healthy Congregations: A System's Approach*, Steinke identifies seven "health promoters" in the congregation. His first promoter is a sense of purpose. The human body, he argues, is a purposeful organization. Systemically speaking, all parts of the body work together for a common and well-stated goal—survival and growth.

Healthy congregations are also purposeful organizations. They have a clear direction. They keep asking, What is God calling us to be? What is the meaning of what we do? They have a working vision that conveys the message that together they can influence their future. Vision always requires revision. Health is a continuous process, and healthy congregations keep at the work of visioning and revisioning.¹

In fact, because our environment is continually changing and because our culture is often in flux and because what worked yesterday might not necessarily work well or at all tomorrow, the "perfect" structure is one that is flexible enough to become an even better structure tomorrow.²

The tragedy in many churches today is that they go through years of congregational life without asking the all-important question as to why they are doing what they are doing. At times, activity seems to be the real purpose behind church life. The unstated goal is simply to keep the saints happy and active. As George Odiome once said, "The typical church is an activity trap. Having lost sight of the higher purposes for which it was originated, it now attempts to make up for this loss by an increased range of activities."³

¹ Steinke, 26.

² Ibid., 108.

³ Spader and Mayes. 9.

It is no wonder that Ellen White, years ago, warned the church about the importance of keeping our structures functional and purpose centered. She wrote:

Satan is ever working to have the service of God degenerate into dull form and become powerless to save souls. While the energy, earnestness, and efficiency of the workers become deadened by the efforts to have everything so systematic, the taxing labor that must be done by our ministers to keep this complicated machinery in motion engrosses so much time that the spiritual work is neglected. And with so many things to run, this work requires so large an amount of means that other branches of the work will wither and die for want of due attention.¹

The effects of a structural drift into meaninglessness, which she describes above, can also be witnessed in the local congregation.

However, Ellen White definitely supported the development of management and structural systems. Chaos and a non-unified approach to God's work are contrary to the very character of God. She says:

Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic hosts. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner.²

It is no wonder then that growing churches, the world over, have structures that are focused to accomplish the stated mission of the church. When structures are functional, churches are free to experience the kind of biotic growth that God intended the church to enjoy.

Inspiring Worship Service

Growing churches are high-quality churches. High-quality churches experience a high-quality, inspirational, and meaningful weekly worship experience.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:602.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 93.

The word “inspiring” comes from the Latin word *inspiratio* and means “an inspiredness which comes from the Spirit of God.”¹ Growing churches prayerfully, purposefully plan and lead out in a worship that takes people into the real presence of God where they can be touched, healed, and fed by Him.

The tragic fact, though, is that most churches are not providing inspiring worship services. And the result is a downturn in church attendance that is staggering! A recent Gallup poll reports that 38 percent of all church-going Americans are attending church less frequently than they did just five years ago.² The reason for this, says William Hendricks in his book *Exit Interviews*, is that worship services are boring. He discovered that “it was not just that these gatherings were not interesting; they were not worshipful. They did little to help people meet God.”³

In another study conducted by George Barna, regular church attendees were asked how often church worship services brought them into God’s presence. Twenty-seven percent answered, “Always,” while 12 percent said “Usually.” The most tragic answer came when 34 percent of respondents answered “Never,” and 27 percent said, “Sometimes,” “Rarely,” or “Didn’t know.”⁴

This truly is a sad commentary on the present state of the church and is contrary to the tone and excitement in the heart of the psalmist when he wrote: “I

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 30.

² Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 22.

³ Ibid., 23.

⁴ Ibid., 24.

was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord” (Ps 122:1). It is no wonder, then, that when a church does provide an inspiring worship experience for its members and visitors, it will naturally grow. Member and visitor alike are glad to join in the worship of the most high God. Why? Because God is present and making a real difference in the individual lives of every worshipper.

I appreciate the definition of worship given by Tim Keller, a church-planter, pastor, and worship leader at the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in midtown Manhattan. He explains that worship comes from an old English word meaning “worth-ship.”

I define worship as a private act, which has two parts: seeing what God is worth and giving him what he’s worth. Job says, “I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread” (Job 23:12). . . . Worship is treasuring God: I ponder his worth and then do something about it—I give him what he’s worth. . . . Public worship just means you’re doing it in concert with others.¹

The opposite is unfortunately often true. Too often attending worship service is seen by many churchgoers more as a duty than a precious opportunity to worship God. They come to church in order to be “faithful” church members, and they do so, as Schwarz says, “tolerating patiently a relatively unpleasant experience.”²

Churches that are concerned about congregational health cannot take their worship experience for granted. Leading out in a worship service is not the desired outcome for Sabbath morning. Worshiping God is. The fact is, states Wagner, that all churches conduct worship services, but not all churches worship well.³

¹ Dave Goetz, Marshall Shelley, and Tim Keller, “What It Takes to Worship Well,” *Leadership* (Spring 1994): 18.

² Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 150.

³ Wagner, *The Healthy Church*, 131.

This does not mean that churches need to put on high-powered, professionally choreographed worship events. Excellence is important, not because it will impress God, but because a lack of it can detract from the central message of the hour. What is more important, writes Bill Giovannetti, is authenticity. Authenticity, relating honestly to the Lord, is more important than excellence.¹ It has to do with the heart. Worship has to do with connecting with the Creator and allowing Him to, in turn, inspire our life with a sense of His love, purpose, and peace.

But there is another aspect of inspiring worship that is described well by Stephen Macchia when he notes that healthy churches participate in what he terms “God-exalting worship.”² When God is at the center of what we do, what we sing about, what we meditate upon, it goes a long way to heal modern man of what Paul Anderson calls “the tyranny of self.”³ This kind of God-centered worship allows the sinner, the troubled believer living in a troubled and chaotic world, to see that God is present. He is still the great I AM. He is there, directing the life of all who would allow Him such a privilege.

When the worshiper sees God high and lifted up, like John the Revelator, they too will bow down and cast their crowns before the throne and say: “Worthy are Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created” (Rev 4:11).

¹ Bill Giovannetti, “Great Worship with Modest Means,” *Leadership* (Spring 1994): 52.

² Macchia, 41.

³ Paul Anderson, “Worship as Pastoral Care,” *Leadership* (Summer 1991): 131.

It is no wonder then that Ellen White highlights the desperate need for inspiring, God-exalting worship in God's church:

Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers. . . . The lifeless attitude of the worshipers in the house of God is one great reason why the ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies.¹

Healthy churches are ones that make it a priority to ensure that their corporate worship time is inspiring and meaningful for all those present. This will then become a personal motivator for every member to continue communing with God throughout the week to come—offering up his whole self, his body, as a living sacrifice to the Lord.

Holistic Small Groups

Schwarz discovered that growing churches also were serious about the process of discipling their members by means of what he termed “Holistic Small Groups.” In fact, of all church growth principles surveyed in the Natural Church Development study, the multiplication of small groups was the most important indicator of church growth. Why? Because it gets at the heart of what being a “member” of church is all about, and that is making more and better disciples for Jesus Christ. The corporate worship setting, though immensely important in the spiritual growth of the member, cannot effectively disciple them in the deeper things of Christ. The mentoring process of one-to-one discussion and prayer in the small group setting is the best way for that discipleship dynamic to take place.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:492-493.

Not only do small groups provide a fertile ground for spiritual growth and discipleship, they also, suggests Russell Burrill, are at the heart of Christianity. The essence of small groups, he contends, “is the heart of what church is all about: community.”¹ In fact, Burrill states, fellowship and community are the reason for church growth and evangelism itself. He supports this by quoting from 1 John 1:1-4 where the Apostle states that what we “had seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us.”² The purpose of sharing our testimony with others is that they too might join in the sweet fellowship they enjoy with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Small groups that are relational as well as cognitive help the Christian enjoy and grow up into a closer communion with God and man.

Balance is important. This is why Schwarz emphasizes the “holistic” aspect of small groups. Groups that tend to focus solely on cognitive/doctrinal knowledge at the expense of the practical application of Scripture to everyday life are not balanced. They are not holistic. The small group that is part of the warp and woof of the healthy church is one where members study the Bible, yes—but they also learn to apply what they learn to their daily life as well as allow the study to equip them for productive ministry in the church.

Another important aspect of a “holistic” small group is its deliberate plan to train leadership for the life-giving process of group multiplication. In fact, this conscious process of cell-multiplication, which is based on the biotic principle of

¹ Russell Burrill, *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1997), 16.

² Ibid., 81.

multiplication seen throughout the natural world, is the single most significant factor affecting church growth in the local church.¹

This balanced small group experience is described clearly in Acts 2:41,42 when it says:

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

From the start of the church both doctrine and fellowship—taking place from home to home—have been the foundation of the discipling process.

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, also used this small group multiplication process (which he called “classes”) to disciple and mobilize the members of the church. The purpose of these class meetings was simply to organize people into a structure in which they could receive the support, correction, and encouragement they needed to live as Christians.²

The process of “growing up” in Christ and being trained and mobilized for the work of ministry is neglected in many churches. Churches that are healthy and growing purposely promote and expend large amounts of energy in building, maintaining and multiplying a small group structure. In fact, research done by Flavil Yeakley has shown that in growing churches the adult Sunday school has smaller class sizes and small groups, but in churches that are declining he found larger, lecture-oriented classes.³

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 33.

² Wagner, *The Healthy Church*, 130.

³ Monte Sahlin, *Sharing Our Faith with Friends without Losing Either* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990), 135.

This plan is not only biblically sound, Ellen White also wholeheartedly endorses it. In her testimonies to the church she pens these words: “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err.”¹ And again she writes:

Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This work Christ wants to have done in the heart of every worker. If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life. What testimonies you may bear of the loving acquaintance made with your fellow workers in these precious seasons when seeking the blessing of God. Let each tell his experience in simple words. This will bring more comfort and joy to the soul than all the pleasant instruments of music that could be brought into the churches. Christ will come into your hearts. It is by this means only that you can maintain your integrity.²

She ends this quotation by stating that in the life and work of these small companies or groups, the believers will be able to maintain their integrity. What does this mean? “Integrity” means to be complete, whole, undivided, integrated. The opposite would be a person who is incomplete, divided, and broken. This kind of unity and completeness, Ellen White asserts, is best accomplished in a small group. After all, asserts Miguel Angel Cerna, the goal of the Christian is to have a deep and abiding love for God and for others (John 13:35). But this kind of principle cannot be learned in a large group or in isolation. “Intimacy takes place among a caring few.”³

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 7:21-22.

² *Ibid.*, 195.

³ Miguel Angel Cerna, *The Power of Small Groups in the Church* (Newbury Park, CA: El Camino Publishing, 1991), 31.

As early as 1871 Ellen White wrote a simple piece explaining how to conduct meetings that give us an understanding of Wesley's "class meetings" and includes some guiding principles for small groups today.

Meetings for conference and prayer should not be made tedious. . . . Formality and cold stiffness should be laid aside. . . . What is the object of assembling together? . . . We meet together to edify one another by a mutual interchange of thoughts and feelings, thus making one another acquainted with our aspirations, our hopes, and gather strength, and light, and courage from one another. . . . From the light which I have received, our meetings should be spiritual and social. . . . Like a united family, simplicity, meekness, mutual confidence, and love should exist in the hearts of brethren and sisters who meet to be refreshed and invigorated by bringing their lights together.¹

Though Schwarz does not offer a prescriptive description of what a holistic small group should look like, I would suggest that Jeffrey Arnold's description of the life and work of a small group comes close. He states that there are five fundamental small group tasks within the framework of the Christian community: "study, worship, prayer, evangelism and mission."² The important aspect of this principle as it relates to a healthy church and church growth is that the groups be a safe, balanced place for the Christian to grow in the knowledge and practice of being a disciple of Christ.

Need-oriented Evangelism

In Schwarz's survey of growing churches around the world, he discovered that in churches that are growing, evangelism is important. It is central to their vision and mission. And more importantly, he discovered that evangelism was strategically

¹ Ellen White, "How to Conduct Meetings," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 30, 1871, 1.

² Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 42.

done in a way that best met an identifiable need among those being targeted.

Schwarz describes this best when he states that the key to church growth is for “the local congregation to focus its evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians.”¹

The reality in most churches is that evangelism is left to the “professionals.” It is seen as being the work of the pastor or perhaps even the sole work of those with the spiritual gift of evangelism. As Mark Mittelberg vividly states, evangelism is seen like one of those “extreme sports” which only professionals with the proper equipment and training or natural ability can do. The often-seen warning flashes in the mind of most Christians on hearing the word evangelism— “Do Not Try This At Home!”²

This fact is proven by some recent research conducted by the Barna group. They discovered that only three out of ten born-again Christians gave a verbal witness of their faith in the month previous to the study. And in a study conducted by the magazine *Christianity Today*, it was found that only 1 percent of its readers had recently shared the gospel with a non-believer. Even more startling is the revelation that among all Christian churches in the United States, only 1.7 new people are brought to the church for every 100 regular church attendees. It is clear by these statistics that the church’s outreach lingo far outpaces its actions in relation to

¹ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 35.

² Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 152.

actually doing evangelism.¹ As Christians, our theology of evangelism is sadly muted by the reality of our deeds.

Norman Shawchuck and Gustave Rath would agree with this need-oriented focus in evangelism. They call it “outside-in thinking.” The high-quality, healthy church will first listen and then respond to what it hears, thus better relating to the world. Practically speaking, this means that in a listening church, the worship services, educational programs, and all ministry activities will routinely focus on hearing the needs, problems, and possibilities with the congregation and surrounding target community.² We could say that their outreach is informed by a clear purpose to meet the needs of those whom they want to reach.

However, knowing and meeting the needs of the target community is not enough. Russell Burrill states: “To merely fill the felt need and not provide an opportunity for them to learn of Jesus has been a fatal flaw in our felt-need methodology. If we fail to introduce Christ through felt needs, we have simply bought into the social gospel.”³ We could say that understanding the needs of the community should serve as a rallying point to mobilize the congregation to daily and strategically implement an evangelistic plan that has as its clear purpose to bringing people to become totally committed disciples of Christ.

This congregational focus on need-oriented evangelism is described well by Lyle E. Schaller when he states that, in the new century, evangelism will not be the

¹ Morgenthauer, 27.

² Shawchuck and Rath, 101.

³ Russell Burrill, *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996), 108.

responsibility of some committee of five to ten people. Evangelism will be seen as a “central thread running through every facet of congregational life.”¹ Evangelism, once again, is seen not as a program, but as a congregational mandate and calling. Evangelism is cherished as a mission given to every believer, the pursuit of which will invigorate and transform the church into a living, relevant force for eternal change in the community.

The principle of need-oriented evangelism is not extrabiblical, nor does it come from some misguided overemphasis on consumerism. It is founded clearly in the Bible and is best exemplified by Paul’s clear statement on the purpose and parameters for effective evangelism. He writes:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Cor 9:20-22)

Paul’s objective was always the same—to save some. His methodology was informed by the context and culture of whom he sought to reach. He obviously listened to his target audience and took careful notice of their needs, as he did on Mars Hill in dealing with the Athenians. But, in actuality, he was only following the example of his master, Jesus Christ. For the Bible records that He too studied His target audience. He too became acquainted with their needs. Luke 15:2 says that both “the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’.”

¹ Lyle E. Schaller, *The New Reformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 88.

Jesus knew the needs of those He sought to reach and used those needs as a bridge to their hearts. Ellen White echoes Paul's and the Master's philosophy:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."¹

In the same book she sounds the same theme by stating:

We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are.²

Churches that are healthy understand that they must engage the world in order to influence it with the power of the Gospel. Churches that are healthy understand that this influencing process is not done by a few "gifted" or paid individuals, but rather is continuously accomplished by the membership at large. As the members mingle with the lost, listen to their needs, and meet them through the power of the indwelling Christ, evangelism takes place and the harvest is reached.

I like the way George Hunter describes this evangelism process. He says that a person coming to Christ is much like a chain with many links. There are the first links, middle links, and finally the last link. There are many influences and conversations that precede a person's decision to convert to Christ. He goes on to say: "I know the joy of being the first link at times, a middle link usually and occasionally the last link. God has not called me to only be the last link. He has called me to be faithful and to love all people."³

¹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 143.

² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 152.

³ George Hunter, 155.

When a whole church—every member—realizes that they daily have the privilege and joy of being one link in someone’s salvation chain, and actively, prayerfully, and faithfully act upon the opportunities God gives them in the course of the day, then that church as a whole becomes a wonderful chain-link bridge between the world of darkness and the world of the light of a life in Christ. This is a healthy church that will experience natural church development.

Loving Relationships

The last of the eight quality characteristics identified by Schwarz’s landmark study deals with the quality of the fellowship and love in a congregation. In essence, the study found that the higher the “love quotient” was in a congregation, the healthier the church was. And as would be expected, the healthier the church, the higher its love quotient. The higher its love quotient, the better its evangelistic results. Why? Because the members are attracting people to the church with both their message and the warmth of their honest and sincere fellowship.¹

John Miller describes this kind of congregation this way:

[The hospitable church] aggressively and joyfully seeks out the Unchurched, laboring to welcome them into the church as members of the body of Christ. Its leaders self-consciously reject a “Christian clubhouse” atmosphere and devote themselves to developing in the congregation an open face to the community and the world beyond. The local leaders model a welcoming lifestyle and seek to mobilize others to do the same.²

It is not hard to see how such a church would experience natural growth and development. After all, Jesus Himself said that men—the lost, the harvest—would

¹ Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church*, 135.

² John Miller, 81.

know that we are Christians by the love we exhibit one to another.¹ Ellen White also underlines the unquestionable correlation between a loving fellowship and church growth when she says:

The golden chain of love, binding the hearts of the believers in unity, in bonds of fellowship and love, and in oneness with Christ and the Father, makes the connection perfect, and bears to the world a testimony of the power of Christianity that cannot be controverted.²

If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where there is only one.³

Most churches are blind to a weakness in this quality factor. When most members or pastors are asked if their church is a loving place, they will answer with a resounding affirmative.⁴ The reason for this is that established members enjoy established friendships. Newcomers, however, experience a landscape of cliques and barriers to meaningful fellowship. C. John Miller concludes that many congregations are so dulled to the biblical norm of the welcoming church that the leaders and members alike rate themselves much higher on the welcoming chart than they really are.⁵

The reality of most churches is explained by Lyle Schaller when he states that there is considerable evidence to suggest that at least one third to one half of all members of Protestant congregations do not have a sense of belonging to the

¹ John 13:35.

² Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973), 237.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 9:189.

⁴ Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998), 116.

⁵ John Miller, 82.

congregation to which they are members.¹ Research carried out by Warren Ruff as part of his Doctor of Ministry dissertation discovered that the figures quoted by Schaller are accurate within Adventism. In a survey of randomly sampled members of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, 53 percent of members surveyed said that they “belonged” in the church. Twenty-six percent said they were trying to fit in, and another 8 percent said they did not fit in at all.²

The challenge for the church is to have the courage to do an honest self-evaluation to see how strong their local love quotient is. Is the local church truly doing all it can to integrate and build meaningful and lasting relationships in the church?

A Ninth Adventist Characteristic

The above-mentioned eight quality characteristics are broad church-health principles that, as we have seen, receive broad, biblical, Ellen White, and pastoral support. However, there is one characteristic that I believe would merit further study as a particular characteristic of a healthy Seventh-day Adventist church. I am speaking of a characteristic that we could call “Mission-Driven Identity.” This principle is based on the premise that when a church understands that individually and corporately it is the body of Christ,³ that members individually are also a living temple,⁴ and that they are called for the specific and prophetic purpose of preaching

¹ Lyle Schaller, *Assimilating New Members* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 16.

² Warren Butler Ruff, “The Belonging Principle in Church Membership” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1996), 83.

³ Eph 4:4-16.

⁴ 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 1 Pet 2:5.

the Three Angels Message in earth's final hour, this cognitive and sociologically confessed identity cannot help but inspire and motivate a church to better health.

One could argue that such a clearly defined and recognized identity would naturally fall under the greater umbrella of the principle of functional structures. And in general terms, it could. However, one could argue as well that a church might enjoy a high score in the area of functional structures and still not be particularly strong in its understanding of its Adventist identity. It is my observation that such churches, though focused and lean in the area of structures, mission, and vision, are nonetheless not experiencing the kind of natural growth God would desire.

C. Peter Wagner highlights the connection between an inspiring identity and church growth when he reports that his research and experience have shown that when a church's distinctive identity is blurred, so is its evangelistic effectiveness.¹ My observations also lead me to the same conclusion. In churches where there is a high identity quotient, where members are reminded that they are a special people, called at a special time to accomplish a special mission, these same members are inspired by their identity and are more motivated to devote their life to the cause that they so clearly identify with.²

It would be interesting to see some empirical studies done in this area to learn whether or not my suggestion is valid. I hope that in the future such a study could be

¹ Wagner, *The Healthy Church*, 82.

² Dean Kelley wrote a book in which he showed that conservative churches were growing while mainline denominations were declining. The conservative churches mentioned in his book included Southern Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons and others, all of which can be classified as conservative. All of these churches, it could be argued, also have a higher than average sense of identity and mission. Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), 20-21.

undertaken and the results shared with those who have an interest in pursuing church health.

Biotic Principles

Having surveyed the “why’s” of Natural Church development (mainly the bipolar theology which serves as Schwarz’s theological framework for his church health theories) and studied the “what” of NCD (i.e., that is the principles that describe what exactly a healthy church looks like), let us turn our attention now to the “How” question of Natural Church Development, and that is what Schwarz calls the Biotic Principles.

Simply put, the biotic principles are principles which are extrapolated from the natural, organic world and which best describe the “all by itself” growth which occurs when an organism exists in a favorable or healthy environment. This “all by itself” concept receives its biblical application from two Scripture passages. The first is taken from the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4:26-29. Here Jesus equates the Kingdom of God to a man who scatters seed on the ground, and with amazement watches it grow—all by itself—even though the farmer does not understand how it all happens.

The second passages is found in 1 Cor 3:6. Paul explains that at times he has planted the seed of the gospel, then Apollos has watered it, but in all cases, God has given the increase. God is the one who works the magic. God is the one who generates the growth, not the church or its workers. Our role is “not to strive to produce growth but create an environment which maximizes the opportunities for

God to work among his people. In this sense the growth takes place (by itself) and constitutes healthy growth.”¹

Another way of understanding the biotic principles is to consider them in relation to the quality characteristics discussed above. After a church profile has been conducted in a church and a minimum factor identified (the weakest quality characteristic at that particular time and in that particular church), then the biotic principles exist to provide the tools to address the quality characteristic in question.² In summary, it can be said that all six biotic principles identified by the Institute of Natural Church Development are really only responses to a simple question: “How can we create an environment that will allow God’s growth automatisms—with which He himself builds the church—ever-increasing influence?”³

Too often in implementing programs or planning for a systematic and carefully thought-out change process for a local church, all these activities are done with no understanding of the “rules of the game,” with no clear peripheral vision in place to capture the big picture of what is happening. When biotic principles are understood, and when they are, more importantly, allowed to inform the change process which a local church intends to embark upon in order to improve its congregational health, then the process and outcome, Christian Schwarz would suggest, will proceed more smoothly towards the desired end.

¹ Direct Ministry Resources, “The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles,” unpublished MS, January 2000, 3, in my possession.

² Ibid., 4.

³ Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 81.

Another interesting vantage point from which to view the biotic principles is proposed by Direct Ministry Resources when they remind the church that biotic principles and quality characteristics are not to be viewed separately. They suggest that a way to connect the two is through the concept of values.

The quality characteristics are indicators of health (when measured) and as such provide the *framework* for addressing the issues of health. At this point not much distinguishes them from other tools which assess church life. . . . What distinguishes NCD as both an assessment tool and as a paradigm is its focus on the health of the church through the application of values to those eight quality characteristics. This is seen in the adjectives.¹

The adjectives, or the values being discussed, are the “empowering” part of leadership, the “inspiring” part of worship, and so on. Because the adjective is value centered, the biotic principles can help a church introduce biotic processes which incorporate NCD’s stated values into the warp and woof of the operation of the church, thus improving its health.²

Schwarz outlines the following biotic principles which, due to the scope of this chapter, are described only in broad terms.

Interdependence

The decision that is made in one area of church life will most likely impact, for good or bad, other areas of church life. The saying that “no man is an island” can easily be transcribed here to describe this principle. “No ministry is an island.”³ When a change is made in one area of church life, it will have an impact on other areas as well. Even if the short-term impact of a given decision is good, sometimes

¹ *The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles*, 9.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

the long-term impact on other programs or the overall health of the church can be jeopardized.

The skillful leader will keep this principle always in mind, constantly asking himself or herself, “Are the long-term effects that this step has on other areas of the church organism beneficial for the development of the church or not?”¹ Near-sightedness will only lead to frustration and pain.

Multiplication

I like the way Schwarz describes this principle when he states that a “tree does not keep getting bigger; it brings forth new trees, which in turn produce more trees.”² Healthy organisms aim to reproduce themselves. From the fertilized cell, multiplying again and again to produce a baby—to most, if not all creatures and living organisms in the world—multiplication leads to and contributes to sustainability. The same can be said for the local church or the local small group, or the local church member. A healthy church, and a pastor in tune with this principle, will always be quick to ask the question, “Does this step or decision, contain multiplication dynamics or does it merely contribute to addition?”³

Energy Transformation

Up to this point the biotic principles mentioned above are easily evident in nature. They are also easily applied to the church setting. Energy transformation is more vague, and in all the literature I have read is best understood when looking not

¹ Schwarz and Schalk, 126.

² Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 68.

³ Schwarz and Schalk, 136.

at nature but at the example of the practitioners of the martial art of Jujitsu or by observing a surfer at the beach. Both of these endeavors use one force to assist them in their own activity. The Jujitsu fighter uses the force of his opponent to intensify his own counterforce. The surfer uses the energy of the waves to propel him swiftly along.

This does not mean that energy transformation cannot be witnessed in nature. Good examples of it can be seen in snow that, when melted by the sun, can unleash a ferocious current down a mountain valley. Water, frozen and unmoving, when heated by the sun, becomes a liquid force of destruction, or even electric energy, as this seemingly negative energy is harnessed by a well-engineered hydroelectric dam.

In the church context, energy transformation is seen to be a biotic principle which seeks to gather all energy that is expended in the church and directing it towards the church's health. The following question can help the pastor or church leader better discern this principle: "Is this measure, decision, or program utilizing the energy relationships of the environment, or trying to fight them?"

When negative energy is encountered in the local church, then Natural Church Development would say that it could be that we are not aptly applying biotic principles to the change process. Whatever the reason is that we are experiencing "wind in our face," the skillful leader will do all possible to turn that wind to good use, i.e., the growth and health of the church.

It is fair to say, though, that the application of this biotic principle in the daily life of the congregation is one of the most difficult. Using it takes practice and a keen sense of the forces at work in the environment. It takes an almost sixth sense. For this reason it is suggested that pastors and church leaders become familiar and

comfortable with using the force-field analysis process where positive and negative forces are visibly identified and quantified. This visual exercise helps the leadership to plan how best to transform negative energy into positive forces for the good of the church.¹

Multi-Usage

This principle is best understood by the setting up of “processes whereby energy, once invested, is put to many uses to reinforce and build the ministry in which [it is] invested.”² From the world of nature this principle is seen in that there is little or no “waste.” Leaves that fall from a tree in turn provide important nutrients for its further development as well as the growth of any of its offspring.

Translating this easily observed biotic principle to the local church setting is simple. Multi-usage of facilities, training events, and staff schedules all conserve energy and thus enhance church health. Beyond this, on a deeper level though, the principle of multi-usage understands that when resources are invested in the life of the church, they must at one and the same time help in the development of new resources for future use. This in turn leads to self-sustainability.

The key question in helping to identify whether or not this principle is operating effectively in the church is: Do the results of this decision, program, or measure aid to further sustain the ministry of the church, or do we have here only a one-way street?³ Any program or person that demands energy and resources but does

¹ Ibid., 154.

² *The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles*, 21.

³ Schwarz and Schalk, 156.

not contribute an equal or greater amount of energy or resources back to the church will eventually “drain” the church of its ability to act creatively in its pursuit of health. When this principle is ignored, the church is soon drained of its energy and resources with little left for future growth and expansion.

Symbiosis

In the natural world, symbiosis would be defined as being the “intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship.”¹ The clown fish living and playing in the deadly tentacles of the sea anemone is a perfect example. In short, this kind of association is a win-win relationship. The anemone protects the clown fishes while the fish that the clown fish attracts to its “home” serve to feed the anemone.

This principle of symbiosis is described clearly by Paul’s explanation of the Body of Christ. The whole body is made up of different organs, with different functions, all of which exist and cooperate to the benefit of the whole. If the whole body were made up of eyes, or ears, where would the sense of smell be?² “Mutual complementation, mutual dependence, mutual benefit, diversity in unity—these are the key words that translate the term ‘symbiosis’ into a language we Christians are probably more familiar with.”³

A key question to ask to ensure the effective implementation of this biotic principle is, “Does this step contribute to fruitful cooperation of different forms of

¹ *The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles*, 24.

² 1 Cor 12:17-21.

³ Schwarz and Schalk, 167.

ministry, or does it promote an ecclesiastic mono-culture?”¹ The end result of properly implementing this principle is a selfless ministry culture in the church, which naturally will lead to better church health.

Functionality

This biotic principle comes very close to being indistinguishable from the quality characteristic of functional structures. Schwarz maintains that all things in nature exist for a clear purpose. They live to accomplish a pre-ordained function. As such, this biotic principle aims to aid church leaders to keep clearly before them the importance of the function and purpose of each and every program and ministry in the church. When the desired “fruit,” for which the ministry exists to bear, is not delivered, then something must be done to remedy the situation.

The quality characteristic has much the same aim in mind. Functional structures, as noted above, have all to do with maintaining functionality in all aspects of church life. It has to do with remaining purpose driven in all that the church does. It has to do with a clearly articulated vision of God’s preferred future for the church as well as a clearly marked plan on how to get there. Therefore, this biotic principle becomes somewhat redundant as it is addressed mostly in the quality characteristic of functional structures.

A Seventh Biotic Principle—Contextualization

In the process of implementing the Natural Church Development paradigm in many churches in my area, as well as in many training classes for church leaders and NCD coaches, the idea has been presented and validated that another biotic principle

¹ Ibid.

should be added to Schwarz's list. That principle is best described as adaptability or contextualization.

Nature is full of examples of this principle. From the easily identified evidence of microevolution to the capacity of houseplants to bend and reach for the sun, all of them speak of the built-in ability of organisms to adapt. Of course, the organism's adaptability varies from case to case, depending on the species and upon the species' health. However, adaptability is still a biotic principle.

The same can be said for the church. The church in China, thrust underground by a paranoid Chairman Mao, adapted itself to become a fast-growing house-church movement numbering tens of millions. The healthy church in a downtown urban setting can choose and is able to adapt—and must adapt—to a demographic shift in its constituency in order to ensure its future viability. Of course, this contextualization should not include any compromise the doctrinal integrity of the church.

The church's ability to adapt depends on the health of the congregation and of its leadership. Even as age and poor health harden and lessen the flexibility of muscles and joints in humans, so does poor health in the church stiffen its ability to adapt to changing times and circumstances. For this reason I believe that churches should be taught and encouraged to utilize the biotic principle of contextualization as they seek to address their minimum factor and move their churches toward better health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to reference the reader to the five criteria for evaluating a healthy church paradigm outlined in chapter 2. In the preceding pages the Natural Church Development paradigm has been described in some detail. The conclusion one comes to when comparing it with the five criteria is that it definitely meets and surpasses what should constitute a healthy church paradigm. It is quality based, rather than merely quantitative in nature. It utilizes a “big-picture” approach to church health, pursuing a systemic path to church health rather than a program-centered scheme to success. NCD also underlines the fact that God desires and expects the church to grow. The “all by itself” aspect of NCD highlights the fact that God, as creator, has placed growth automatisms in the church which when allowed to work unencumbered by our human folly and “wisdom” will undoubtedly bring about church growth.

In addition, when a church is healthy, it should grow. NCD does not see numerical growth as “unspiritual” or unbiblical. On the contrary, when a church is healthy, it should naturally grow.

As mentioned in the fifth criteria at the close of the last chapter, a viable healthy church paradigm will also emphasize the importance of empowering church leadership, the importance of spiritual passion and development, small groups and effective evangelism, along with structures that facilitate all of the above. Natural Church Development does all these—and more. As such, I would suggest that this paradigm meets all the criteria necessary to serve as a biblical and functional healthy church standard.

Not only does the Natural Church Development paradigm meet the previously stated evaluation criteria for a healthy church theology, it also passes the theological scrutiny from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Of course, not all suppositions and assumptions can be accepted *carte blanche*, but the principles outlined and put forth by the Natural Church Development Institute can readily be used in Adventist churches with the single purpose of making more and healthier churches for the honor and glory of God.



these, 55 percent said that they had developed an implementation strategy to address their minimum factor. Forty-five percent had done nothing, and this after at least six months since taking the NCD survey. Therefore, there are many—almost one half of churches—that take the survey more out of curiosity than anything else, but do nothing to address their minimum factor.

Success in implementation is not as widespread as would be desired. However, there are some churches that have aggressively adopted an implementation strategy to address their minimum factor—for not just one year, but for three in a row—and have shown wonderful signs of growth. An example of this is the Adventist church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, pastored by Dr. Greg Schaller who has seen his minimum factor score improve considerably on two different occasions as he has aggressively devised implementation strategies to address his church's minimum factor.

Weaknesses and Pitfalls in Implementing the NCD Paradigm

My experience in coaching and leading many churches through the NCD implementation process, as well as the survey of churches mentioned above, highlights the fact that the greatest weakness and most common pitfall in the entire NCD paradigm is the process of implementation, or we could say, implementing change.

Why is this the case? Change, in general, is painful. Change is difficult, no matter what the circumstances. Even when members admit that things just are not working well as they are, there is a fear to change. The old saying, “When the horse

is dead, dismount,”¹ is often not practiced in the church. There is at times a common emotional response that says, “Better a dead horse than an unfamiliar horse.”

John Maxwell states that there are four major barriers to successful planning, and by extension, to the success of implementing planned change. They are: fear of change, ignorance, uncertainty about the future, and lack of imagination.² These all play a role in the inability of both pastoral leadership and membership to proactively approach the NCD implementation process.

There are some other reasons why implementation is effective in only about one-half of the churches. First, there is the issue of leadership. If the pastor is not totally committed to the biotic paradigm of NCD, then the process of change and improved health is doomed from the start.

Another factor is poor communication. Two churches, or about 10 percent of the churches that said they had an implementation plan in place, had not even communicated the results of the NCD survey to the church at large. The future of any implementation plan is contingent on buy-in at every level of church leadership as well as membership. In addition, the survey highlighted the fact that a majority of the pastors (56%) had not preached a series on church health and the NCD paradigm. Therefore, the church at large had not been informed about the theological and missiological import and impact that NCD could and should have on their church.

This lack of vision-casting, resource-focusing communication can only hinder an implementation plan. It is essential that an efficient, redundant communication superhighway be set up to communicate the vision for a healthy church as well as

¹ McLaren, 23.

² Maxwell, 41.

communicate the plans and progress of the church in accomplishing its agreed-upon church health objectives.

Second, in my opinion, the most glaring and dangerous pitfall on the road to implementation is the lack in almost 50 percent of Adventist churches of any well-thought-out biotic-principled plan to improve the churches' minimum factor. In fact, in 44 percent of the churches surveyed, biotic principles played no role at all in the development of their implementation plan. An additional 39 percent of churches said that biotic principles played a moderate role. Therefore, not only do many churches not have a plan all together, but also 15 percent of churches that have a plan report that the biotic principles played no role at all in the development of their plan. Thirty-nine percent said that the biotic principles played a moderate role in the development of their plans.¹

One final point can be mentioned here in relation to implementation, and that is the lack of any Adventist-sensitive NCD material. This has also played a role in the poor implementation record of Adventist churches. The survey also pointed out an interesting pattern or pitfall in the health of Adventist churches in North America and that is a glaring, recurring minimum factor among Adventist churches. Thirty-four percent of churches surveyed recorded a minimum factor in Gift-oriented Ministry. Following closely behind it, 31 percent of churches demonstrated a minimum factor in Holistic Small Groups.² Therefore, a full 65 percent of churches report having a minimum factor of just one of two characteristics.¹

¹ Refer to Table 1 found in chapter 1 for more information.

² For reference sake, the maximum factor (a church's highest quality quotient characteristic) for the churches surveyed was Passionate Spirituality (29%), followed closely by Need-oriented

As a church that preaches on spiritual gifts and claims a prophet as part of its revelation history, and as a church that doctrinally embraces the important role of all believers in the work of ministry, it is sad that Gift-oriented Ministry is the denomination's most common minimum factor.

Implications for the Implementation Guide

The implications for the development of an Adventist implementation guide are very clear. First, the guide must be user-friendly and practical in nature. It must also be focused on serving as a consultant in the process of implementing the needed changes to improve congregation help.

This fact was borne out by a series of suggestions made, as part of the aforementioned survey, as to possible future resources to be developed for SDA churches to aid in the implementation process. The highest score, the suggestion that most respondents wanted to see happen, was to create a resource that contained *practical* principles for implementing successful change in the local church.

The survey also highlighted the need for an implementation guide that was purposefully Adventist in its theological evaluation and application. For this reason, the implementation guide developed as part of this project incorporates a strong Adventist flavor.

Evangelism (24%). It is also interesting to note that not a single church reported having Functional Structures as its maximum factor.

¹ This has interesting implications in terms of how local conferences and Unions should allocate their time and money, as it would seem that time and money spent on developing training and enrichment and coaching resources for just these two quality characteristics could have a tremendous impact on the overall health of a large percentage of Adventist churches in North America. It should also be noted that some churches reported having two equal scores for minimum factors—so the percentages do not add up to 100%.

CHAPTER 5

THE CREATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The Need

In the previous chapters I have outlined the biblical call for church health. I have taken time to review and analyze the theological foundation of the Natural Church Development paradigm from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. A survey of Adventist churches participating in the NCD implementation process was described in the previous chapter with the view of better understanding what some of the implementation problems are in the local church. What was discovered was that the most glaring and troubling problem facing Adventist churches is that almost a full half of churches who desire to implement the NCD paradigm get no further than taking the church survey. In effect, no real implementation takes place.

It is this evident lack of practical and actual implementation progress of the NCD principles in the local church that gives rise to the need for a practical, Adventist-sensitive NCD implementation guide. In addition, my own observation of churches in the Chinese Union Mission, including five churches that I am personally coaching in the Hong Kong Macao Conference, has shown that more often than not, upon discovering their minimum factor, many churches and church leaders do not know what to do. They do not know what steps to take to improve their church health or get their members “on board” in order to bring about the changes they feel need to take place to improve their

minimum factor. For this reason, a practical guide is needed to help churches implement the needed changes to improve their congregational health.

There are a number of resources available to churches to help in the implementation process. However, to date, there is no readily available Adventist resource. In addition to this fact, the most widely available non-SDA resources have proven not to be as helpful as one would hope. In the survey conducted of Adventist churches that had started the implementation process it was discovered that 37 percent of the churches had not even used Christian Schwarz's Implementation Guide though it is provided as part of the church profile packet.¹ Of those who have used it, many found it tedious, overly technical, and overwhelming. One respondent summarized these feelings by stating that the implementation guide written by Christian Schwarz was "overwhelming and generally not helpful."

The fact is that the guide is full of useful information and advice. I find it to be insightful and helpful. However, for some reason it has come across as too technocratic (to use a common term of NCD), and not practical enough for most churches to find helpful in the very real world of daily church life. For this reason I have prepared an Adventist implementation guide, which I hope will be thorough in its coverage of the topic, but yet practical and usable and Adventist focused.

Development of the Implementation Guide

Development of the implementation guide followed closely the theological discoveries outlined in this paper. First, the question of the theological validity of church

¹ Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk. *Natural Church Development Implementation Guide, Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998).

health is discussed, followed by a step-by-step discussion of how to implement NCD in the local church setting. Following this, a large section is dedicated to looking at each of the eight quality characteristics from an SDA theological standpoint. In addition to this theological overview, evaluation questions are suggested which could help the local church identify areas of weakness in order to strengthen their local church. Finally, five action steps are recommended to assist the local congregation to improve their quality quotient in each of the eight quality characteristics.

The final section of the implementation guide is dedicated to answering frequently asked questions pertaining to Natural Church Development as a whole and to its implementation in the local church in particular. The general outline of the implementation guide is listed below for easy reference:

1. Section One: Why is church health important?
2. Section Two: How do I implement NCD in my local church?
3. Section Three: What steps do I need to take to improve my church's minimum factor?
4. Section Four: Frequently Asked Questions.

Another consideration in developing the implementation guide was the input received through the previously mentioned survey of churches already implementing the NCD paradigm.¹ A number of questions were posed requesting information on what kind of resources they felt would be helpful for Adventist churches in their work of implementing the NCD paradigm. The answers received also informed the work and

¹ See table 4.

TABLE 4

FUTURE NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Q#	Suggested Resource	Mean Score
33	Practical principles for implementing successful change in the local church.	4.52
31	Practical applications of biotic principles to real-life church situations.	4.16
32	Checkpoints for change in each of the eight quality characteristics.	4.07
36	A study of Ellen White and NCD principles.	4.02
37	Recommendations, ideas, brainstorm-starters for each of the eight quality characteristics	4.02
35	A small-group study guide on the healthy church and NCD paradigm.	3.91
34	Discussion points for the leadership group for each of the eight quality characteristics.	3.91
39	An SDA online resource for NCD questions and issues.	3.81
40	A list of SDA NCD certified coaches in your area.	3.72
29	An SDA theological study of a healthy church and the NCD paradigm.	3.51
30	An SDA theological study of the biotic principles.	3.38
38	Suggestions for an NCD implementation calendar.	3.27

Note: These scores represent the responses given by 38 church leaders as to what they perceive the value would be to the stated NCD resources. Each resource idea was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning the resource would be of no help, and 5 representing their opinion that the resource would be extremely helpful. They are listed here starting with the resource idea receiving the highest mean score. See Appendix A for a sample of the survey used.

development of the attached implementation guide for Adventist churches.¹ For example, the most requested resource by local churches was practical steps to implement change in the local church. For this reason, a whole step in the four-step implementation process is dedicated to suggesting some practical steps that local church leadership can do to help the church prepare for change.²

Another request that received a good amount of support by those surveyed was the desire to have practical checkpoints for change for each of the eight quality characteristics.³ For this reason, the entire section three in the implementation guide is dedicated to looking at each of the eight quality characteristics from a practical, applicable point of view.

My hope in developing this NCD implementation resource is to provide a practical, user-friendly, Adventist-focused tool that will assist local churches to improve their congregational health and therefore increase their harvest capacity.

¹ See table 4.

² See Question 33, table 4.

³ See Question 32, table 4.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ellen White was given a compelling vision of God's end-time church family. It describes a church with vibrant health, full of zeal and passion for the Kingdom of God. This vision was written out for the encouragement of the Adventist church in *Testimonies to the Church*:

In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lighted with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844.¹

Church health is foundational in achieving the above stated vision. Only a church that experiences vibrant congregational health can so unselfishly and passionately give itself to the work of reaching those around them who have yet to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. One can in essence look at a church's program and congregational life and see what makes it tick. As Brian McLaren states so pointedly, "The church's

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 126.

program is the sum of its actions employed to achieve its mission.”¹ If a church’s mission, its passion, is to energetically make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ, then its congregational life and program will reflect this mission. It will intentionally seek to design and live out a life that reflects this passion for God’s mission. This is exactly what you see in Ellen White’s vision of the church at the end of time. Its “program” is one that is fully functional (purpose and mission driven); its members are part of a loving community who are involved in need-oriented evangelism. They are studying together in small groups. They are passionate about their spiritual life and their role in the body of Christ. All members are using their gifts—gifts of healing, music, and evangelism, to edify the body of Christ.

My heartfelt hope and desire is to see the Adventist church realize this vision of the church given to Ellen White so many years ago. I believe that NCD is an effective, quality-driven, intentional method that the Lord can and is using to help His church improve in health and increase its harvest capacity. The development of an implementation guide for use in Adventist churches is, I pray, my small contribution to enhance the effectiveness of the NCD process within the Adventist church.

Methods and paradigms are not ends in themselves. They are tools that when used and empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit, God can use to strengthen His church. May God bless those in His church who seek to use the tool of NCD to better fit them for the sprawling harvest that awaits them at every turn.

¹ Brian McLaren, *Reinventing the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1998), 38.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE SURVEY AND COVER LETTER

NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSESMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES IN PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

Thank you for your willingness and help in filling out this survey. We hope that your candid responses will help us develop resources that will enable local churches to become healthier communities of faith.

1. How long have you been a pastor at your present church?
 - a. Less than one year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 3-5 years
 - d. More than 5 years
2. What is your present age? (Please circle the number of your response)
 - a. Under 25 years
 - b. 26-35 years
 - c. 36-45 years
 - d. 46-55 years
 - e. Over 55 years
3. What is the present book membership of your church? (Please circle the number of your response)
 - a. Less than 50
 - b. 51 to 100 members
 - c. 101 to 200 members
 - d. 201 to 400 members
 - e. 401 to 700 members
 - f. More than 700 members
4. What is your average Sabbath attendance?
 - a. Less than 50
 - b. 51 to 100
 - c. 101 to 200
 - d. 201 to 400
 - e. 401 to 700 members
 - f. More than 700 members
4. What is your average Sabbath attendance?
 - a. Less than 50
 - b. 51 to 100
 - c. 101 to 200
 - d. 201 to 400
 - e. 401 to 700
 - f. More than 700
5. How many pastors are on your church staff?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
 - e. More than four

6. How many locally paid staff, both full and part time, does your church have?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. Four or more
7. Why did your church decide to take the NCD survey?
8. Was there any resistance to taking the NCD survey?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
9. If there was resistance, please describe the nature of the resistance?
10. How long has it been since you administered the NCD assessment questionnaire?
 - a. Less than 1 month
 - b. 1 – 3 months
 - c. 4 – 6 months
 - d. 7 – 12 months
 - e. Over one year ago
11. Who did you first introduce the NCD paradigm?
 - a. To the Board
 - b. To Key leaders, some of whom were on the Board
 - c. To Key leaders, none of whom were on the Board
 - d. To the church in Business Session
 - e. To the church in a sermon.
 - f. Other:
12. Have the Eight Quality Characteristics been presented to the church in a sermon series?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
13. What was your church's Minimum Factor?
 - a. Empowering Leadership
 - b. Gift-Oriented Ministry
 - c. Passionate Spirituality
 - d. Functional Structures
 - e. Inspiring Worship
 - f. Holistic Small Groups
 - g. Need-oriented Evangelism
 - h. Loving Relationships
14. What was your church's Maximum Factor?
 - a. Empowering Leadership
 - b. Gift-oriented Ministry
 - c. Passionate Spirituality
 - d. Functional Structures
 - e. Inspiring Worship
 - f. Holistic Small Groups
 - g. Need-oriented Evangelism
 - h. Loving Relationships
15. What body received and studied the results of the NCD survey?
 - a. The Church Board
 - b. The Board of Elders

- c. An Ad-hoc Committee set up by the board
 - d. An informal group of key leaders
16. Has the whole church been notified of the results of the survey?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
17. If the church received the results, how did they learn about it?
- a. In a sermon
 - b. In the church newsletter
 - c. In a business meeting
 - d. Other:
18. What group of people has been working on an implementation strategy to address the minimum factor and over-all church health?
- a. The Church Board
 - b. Only the Pastor
 - c. The Board of Elders
 - d. An Ad-hoc Committee set up for this purpose
 - e. An informal group of key leaders
 - f. No one to date
 - g. Other:
19. Has a strategy been agreed upon to address the minimum factor?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
20. If you answered "yes" above, please take a moment to write an outline of the strategy in the space provided. Include the time frame for implementation, if applicable: (If you answered "no" to question #18 please go to question #26).
21. Have the biotic principles, as explained by Christian Schwarz, played any role in the development of your strategy?
- a. A big role. We used them in developing our strategy.
 - b. A moderate role. We referred to them on occasion.
 - c. No role. We did not refer to them at all.
22. Has your church been working with a coach in implementing NCD principles?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. We would like to, but don't know how to contact one.
23. If you have been working with a coach, has it been helpful? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
24. In developing your strategy did you use any of the following resources? (Please check all that apply):
- a. NCD Implementation Guide by Christian Schwarz
 - b. Releasing Your Churches Potential by Bob Logan
 - c. Other:

If you used the NCD Implementation Guide written by Christian Schwarz please rate the usefulness to your implementation process of the listed sections of this book. A score of 1 means that it was not helpful in the least and a score of 5 means you found it extremely useful:

25. Ten Action Steps	1	2	3	4	5
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---

26. How to Improve Your Minimum Factor	1	2	3	4	5
27. Learning to Think Biotically	1	2	3	4	5
28. Frequently Asked Questions	1	2	3	4	5

Below you will find a list of possible future resources for assisting the local Adventist church in fully implementing the Natural Church Development paradigm. Please rate each of them on a scale of 1-5, with one meaning that the resource would be of no help at all and five representing your opinion that the resource would be extremely helpful.

29. An SDA theological study of a healthy church and the NCD paradigm.	1	2	3	4	5
30. An SDA theological study of the Biotic Principles	1	2	3	4	5
31. Practical applications of Biotic principles to real-life church situations	1	2	3	4	5
32. Checkpoints for change in each of the Eight Quality Characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Practical principles for implementing successful change in the local church.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Discussion points for the leadership group for each of the Eight Quality Characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5
35. A small-group study guide on the healthy church and NCD paradigm.	1	2	3	4	5
36. A study on Ellen White and NCD Principles.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Recommendations, ideas, brainstorm-starters for each of the Eight Quality Characteristics.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Suggestions for an NCD implementation calendar.	1	2	3	4	5
39. An SDA online resource for NCD questions and issues.	1	2	3	4	5
40. A list of SDA NCD certified coaches in your area.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your time. Please return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed & stamped envelope. God bless you as you seek to grow healthy, reproducing churches for



October 1, 2000

Dear Church Leader:

Your church has been selected for a study on Natural Church Development and the Adventist church. Our records here at NADEI show that you have completed the Natural Church Development survey and received your church profile. As such, we would really appreciate you taking a few minutes and filling out the enclosed survey, which will help us better understand the NCD implementation process in Adventist churches. For your convenience, we have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope which you can use to return the survey to our NADEI office.

Here at NADEI we are committed to helping the local church unleash the natural growth potential that the Lord has placed in each community of believers. This survey, which is part of a Doctor of Ministry study conducted by Pastor Bob Folkenberg, Jr. in conjunction with NADEI, will help us better understand what materials and training we can develop in order to provide better resource for Adventist churches participating in the Natural Church Development process.

We thank you in advance for your time in filling out this survey. We pray that your candid input and suggestions will help churches across our Division become healthier communities with a passion for the harvest!

Sincerely,

Russell Burrill, Director
North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI)

Bob Folkenberg, Jr.
Andrews University
Doctor of Ministry Candidate

BF/rl

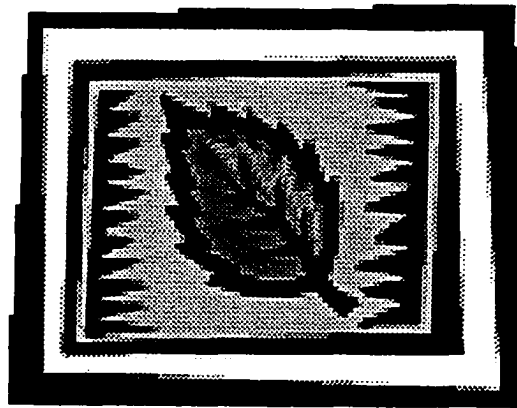
Enclosures

9047 U.S. 31 North, Suite 3
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

APPENDIX B
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Health for the Harvest

four exhilarating steps to total congregational health



A Natural Church Development Implementation Guide for Seventh-day Adventist Churches
Written by Robert Folkenberg, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION:

1. *What can you expect from this guide?*

- A user-friendly, intuitive tool to help you lead your congregation to better health.
- An introduction to the Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy reasons for being healthy.
- A Seventh-day Adventist perspective on implementing the Natural Church Development paradigm in the local church.
- Practical action steps for making the needed “lifestyle” changes to improve your congregational health.

2. *What you should not expect from this guide?*

- A book. You won’t find long chapters and complex explanations to the deep mysteries of ecclesiological life. This is a handbook. A guidebook.
- All the answers. There are no “only add water and mix” kind of solutions in this guide. Local churches must come up with local solutions, guided by the Holy Spirit and the local church’s mission and vision.
- In-depth materials on the Biotic Principles. The scope of this guidebook cannot reach that far. For a more detailed analysis and description of these principles please refer to Schwarz’ *Natural Church Development Implementation Guide* as well as to Direction Ministry Resources, *The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles*.¹
- An introduction of the NCD paradigm, including the eight quality characteristics. This implementation guide will not teach you about the research that these principles are based on. A basic knowledge of these things is assumed. For more information on these topics it would be good to read Christian Schwarz’s book *Natural Church Development*.
- A definitive work. This guide is meant to act as a springboard for you and your leadership team as you creatively seek interventions to improve your quality quotient. Other resources should also be consulted. Among these are:

Schwartz, Christian. *Natural Church Development*. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996.

- Logan, Robert E., Thomas T. Clegg. *Releasing Your Church's Potential*. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2000.

3. *How should you use this guide?*

- This guide is to be used by church leaders who want to improve their congregations' health and who are willing to take the risks to prayerfully and strategically make the needed changes to achieve this goal.
- Use it prayerfully. Any attempts to create health in the church without prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit are doomed from the start.

4. *Should your church work with a coach?*

- In short – if at all possible, yes. There is a lot to be gained by having an NCD coach work with you through the whole process of implementing change to improve your church health. A coach can offer your church the gift of objectivity, as well as a trained ability to ask clarifying and course defining questions.

The good news is that there is a large network of Adventist NCD coaches who would be more than willing to work with your church towards a greater harvest. If you are interested in finding a coach to work with your church contact the North American Division Evangelism Institute:

NADEI
9047 US 31 N, Suite 3
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Phone: 616-471-9220
Fax: 616-471-9211
Email: info@NADEI.org

5. *What's the big picture?*

- This implementation guide starts with a brief introduction and then is divided into four sections. Each section answers an implementation question. These sections are:
 - **Section One:** Why is church health important anyway?

- **Section Two:** How do I implement Natural Church Development in my church?
- **Section Three:** What steps do I need to take in order to improve our church's minimum factor?
- **Section Four:** Frequently Asked Questions
- Success in implementation depends on four key factors:
 - **Prayer**
Make a commitment to be on your knees from start to finish. Wisdom, strength and a healthy daily dose of hope are what the Lord will grant you in practicing this spiritual discipline.
 - **Leadership**
Someone must point the way; lead the way with boldness and confidence. Visionary leadership is key to the success of any transformational journey.
 - **Perseverance**
Don't give up. Faithfulness to God's call to total congregational health and a passion for the harvest should see you through the dreary, lonely times that will most likely visit you in the near future. Hang in there! He is with you.
 - **Cooperation**
You should not do this alone. Along with God, you should embark on the transformational journey with a team of committed members. If you are alone in this process, then you are not leading anyone. As John Maxwell says, if as a leader no one follows you, you are just out for a walk in the park.

6. *Personal Response and Prayer Focus:*

- At the start of this journey, what is God impressing you personally to change? What is he wishing to implement in your life?

- Lord, help me see my need of you. Let me see myself, as I am – my true colors. Do whatever it takes to bring me to my knees in contrition and humility. Remind me, as I kneel at your feet – a sinner without merit – of your willingness to cleanse me. Remind me of the joy only you can give that will empower me for daily service in your Kingdom. Make it obvious to me how utterly dependent I am on you for purity, purpose and power. In the name of Jesus my Savior I pray, Amen.



SECTION ONE: WHY IS CHURCH HEALTH IMPORTANT?

1. Biblical Foundation

There seems to be universal agreement that churches can get sick. Intuitively, as church leaders, we know when there's something "wrong" in the church; when something is not working well; when some dysfunction undermines the thoughtful efforts of the members to "grow" the church.

There are a number of recently published books that address this very issue. They decry the persistent ill health of American congregations and prophetically call the church to energetically pursue health.² However, one fundamental question is universally overlooked – is it theologically valid to think of the church in terms of being healthy or sick? Is this an appropriate metaphor to use in discussing the church?

a. The Church as a Living Organism

The word "church" appears more than 110 times in the New Testament. In each of these references, not once does it refer to a building or place of worship. "The word 'church' is the English rendering of *ekklesia*, made up of two Greek words: "*ek*" (out from among) and "*kaleo*" (to call). The literal meaning of church is, therefore, 'the called-out assembly.' The church is 'the people who belong to the Lord.'"³ The church then is all about people. The church is made up of living, breathing, and complex people.

As a called-out assembly of individuals, the church is therefore an organic, living organization. As Max DePree says that "each of us is an atom in a living, breathing, and changing organism."⁴ This view of the church as a living body is by far the most often repeated metaphor used in Scripture.

b. The Church: Flock of God

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." *Acts 20:28*⁵

c. Royal Priesthood

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people..." *1 Peter 2:9*

d. Holy Temple

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.” *Ephesians 2:19-22*

e. Living Stones and a Spiritual House

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” *1 Peter 2:5*

f. Bride of Christ

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready.” *Revelation 19:7*

“Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” *Revelation 21:9*

g. Body of Christ

“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” *Romans 12:4-5*

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body,

but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. *Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*” 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Emphasis supplied)

Key points in these verses are:

- Members of the Body are all functionally important
- There is an organic unity in the Body of Christ
- Each member has been placed in the church by God – He’s in charge!
- There is an inherent interdependence between the different members of the Body
- The church is viewed in clearly organic terms

This systemic and organic nature of the Body is further reflected in many of the “love one another” passages in the Scriptures in that they highlight the interdependent nature of the Body of Christ. For example, in Roman 12:15 Paul encourages us to “rejoice with those that rejoice...[and] weep with those that weep.” Again, he reminds us that “we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25); we are to “...build one another up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 RSV), and “...love one another” (1 John 4:7).

As Steinke says in his book, *The Healthy Church: A Systems Approach*, “this is an organic view of the church, of cell working with cell to ensure wholeness.”⁶

h. Conclusions

- The church is a living organism, made up of living members – masterfully placed there by God Himself
- The church, as a living Body, can experience both suffering and joy
- It also follows that the church, as an organic entity can therefore also enjoy good or poor health

2. Ellen White and Church Health

An organic view of the church is clear from Scripture. However, does Ellen G. White mention church health? Does she support the idea that a church can be healthy or sick? The answer is a resounding “yes!” The following quotations are representative of her many references to the health of the church:

a) Weakness of a Sick Church

“It was the moral darkness of the church that had the greatest influence to create the moral darkness and spiritual death in the Institute. Had the church been in a healthy condition, she could have sent a vitalizing, healthful current to this arm of the body. But the church was sickly, had not the favor of God, and enjoyed not the light of his countenance. A sickly, deathly influence was circulated all through the living body, until the disease was apparent everywhere. *Testimonies for the Church at Battle Creek*, 42.

b) Healthy Christians make up Health Church

“In order for the church to be healthy, it must be composed of healthy Christians. But in our churches and institutions there are many sickly Christians.” *Counsels on Health*, 592.

c) Consecration to God brings Health

“There is not that consecration to God, that devotion to His service, and that disinterested labor for the upbuilding of His cause which would make you a prosperous and healthy church.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 354.

d) A Sick Church is Afraid to Work

“The sickly, unhealthy state of the church reveals a church afraid to work, fearing that self-denial will be required. The presence of the Lord is ever seen where every energy of the church is aroused to meet the spiritual responsibilities.” *Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library*, vol. 1, 99.

e) A Feeble and Sick Church

“Sanctification through the Holy Spirit binds up man's will and purpose with the will and purpose of God. If we have not these features in our experience, the church will be sickly and feeble.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, 191.

f) Raising up a Healthy Church

What was her hope for the new church in Williamstown? “Pray for the Lord to work in His own way upon the minds of the people, that a healthy church may be raised up in Williamstown.” *The Paulson Collection of EGW Letters*, 103.

g) Conclusions

- Ellen White understood that a church could be healthy or sick

- Healthy members and leaders make up a healthy church
- Communion and partnership with God bring health to the church
- God's desire for His church is for it to experience vibrant health

3. *The Purpose of Church Health*

What is all the fuss about church health? What is the reason for it, anyhow? This question must be answered clearly. We do not seek health for health's sake; for longevity's sake. We seek health because it will better fit us to *reach the harvest* and in turn *bring honor and glory to God*. We desire health for the harvest; plain and simple.

HEALTH FOR THE HARVEST

4. *Personal Response and Prayer Focus*

- ☐ How is your health? Physical, mental and spiritual? Remembering that healthy leaders and Christians make up a healthy church, what is God impressing you to confess, change or fine-tune in order to achieve better total health?

- ☐ God of wonders, you are holy and awesome. I praise you for your greatness and your grandeur. I also worship you for the intimate plan you have for me and your church – that we enjoy good and vibrant health. I confess, though, my lack of ability to reach, stretch or reach to the level of energy and strength you dream for me. I am totally dependent on you and your enlivening Spirit within. Today, I want to give you full reign of my heart and my will. Do with me as you please – for the sole purpose of bringing honor and glory to your Name. Thank you for this grace. For your love. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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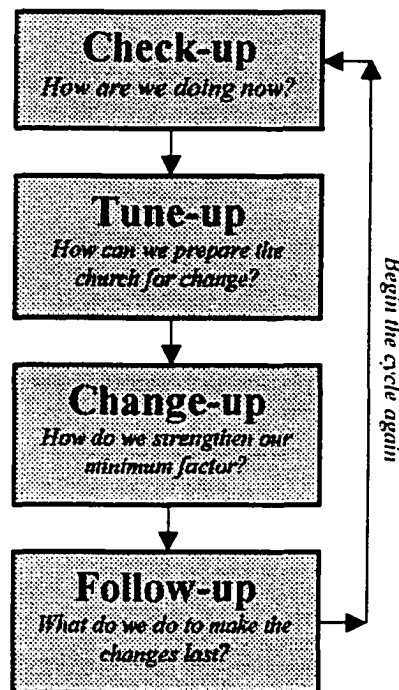


SECTION TWO: HOW DO I IMPLEMENT NCD IN MY LOCAL CHURCH?

In the pages that follow I would like to suggest a four-step process for implementing the Natural Church Development paradigm in your local church. Up front, you should know that these steps will not be easy. In fact, they could be downright scary and intimidating. Because of this, a good percentage of churches go no further than step one.⁷ Those that make it to step four and energetically pursue a strategic implementation process to improve their minimum factor reap wonderful rewards. In fact, research has shown that 85% of churches that actively work on addressing their minimum factor experience both qualitative as well as quantitative congregational growth within *one year*!⁸

The time spent in prayer, networking, planning and focusing your church's resources towards a proactive improvement of your health will pay dividends for the Kingdom of God. So, buckle up. Prepare for a great adventure in purpose-driven, harvest-centered church growth. Consider this a no preservatives, no additives, all natural eco-journey in how to grow your church.

The *four steps* are: **Check-up; Tune-up; Change-up and Follow-up.** The implementation process is illustrated in the following diagram:



Let's look at each of these steps individually and in more detail. (The whole four-step process can be seen in summary and checklist form in *Appendix I*)

I. STEP ONE: Check-up

At the start it is important to do an inventory. It is important to take a good look in the mirror and say – “what is really going on in our church?” At the start of the whole implementation process it is important to get a baseline reading of your congregational health. It's kind of like visiting the doctor to get a “check-up” in order to discover just what your state of health is. Right now. Presently.

One of the reasons congregations are not willing to make the changes necessary to experience vibrant health is that they are content with the status quo. They are happy with how things are right now. Therefore, a congregational health survey can also serve to provide an unbiased and full-color look at what is really happening in your church. You could say that the check-up process allows the church to receive an unambiguous reality check on how the congregation is really doing.

This fact alone can scare many churches. It threatens some congregational leaders. They fear what the check-up process might find. But the fact remains – that a lack of knowledge of your church's state of health does not change its present reality. If I have pneumonia, but don't know it, I still have pneumonia. Plain and simple. The good news is that if I am aware of my condition and submit to proper treatment, there is a better chance to effectively cure the disease in a timely and effective manner. If I'm in a state of denial, well – I risk a long and protracted illness and even possible death.

The same is the case with the church. The check-up process will serve to:

- Inform the leadership and membership of present congregational health
- Identify where the area of church weakness is (minimum factor) so that it can be effectively treated

In addition to the church receiving a thorough check-up during this step, the leadership – especially the Pastor, needs to begin the whole check-up process by taking a serious look at where he/she is in their *own* walk with God, as well as with their own ability to lead. Therefore, the Check-Up step consists of two important parts, which are a personal check-up and a church check-up:

a. Personal Check-up:

- Spiritual Check-up:

In their recent book on congregational change, Herrington, Bonem and Furr emphasize that in order for meaningful and lasting change to take place in a church the congregation must enjoy spiritual and relational vitality. This spiritual vitality must begin with the leadership of the church. And so the question at this stage of the implementation process is – how are you – as pastors and leaders doing spiritually? Think and honestly meditate on the following questions. Don't rush through this process. Take your time. Seek the Lord's clear guidance as you go through this spiritual check-up.

○ *Spiritual Passion:*

- ✓ Does your heart long for a deeper connectedness with God?
- ✓ Do you have a passion for growing in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- ✓ Have you possibly lost your “first love” experience with Christ?
- ✓ Are you nearer today than yesterday to Him?
- ✓ Do you really care about the Lord's discipline?
- ✓ Does your heart hurt with what hurts God's heart?
- ✓ Do you long to see His Kingdom come?
- ✓ Do you have a passion for the lost in your community?

○ *Spiritual Focus:*

- ✓ “Ministry is service in the name of the Lord. Spirituality is attention to the life of the Spirit in us.”⁹ What is your attention span?
- ✓ Where are you headed with God?
- ✓ Do you have a spiritual mission statement?
- ✓ What are the top three spiritual values you cherish and nurture in your private life with Him?
- ✓ What are your life priorities? Have you written them down? Where do God and your spiritual life fit into these priorities?

○ *Spiritual Vulnerability:*

**“The children of
Issachar who had
understanding of the
times, to know what
Israel ought to
do....”**

1 Chronicles 12:32

- ✓ Do you have someone who can direct your spiritual formation? If you are Timothy, who is your Paul?
- ✓ If you are a Paul, who is your Timothy?
- ✓ Has the Holy Spirit been convicting you of a sin that you have not yet yielded to Him?
- ✓ Has the Holy Spirit been convicting you of a growth-step you need to take but to date have chosen not taken?

- Leadership Check-up:

How are you doing as a leader? I would suggest that there are three key elements to effective leadership. Analyze your performance and ability in each of these areas and determine how you can strengthen your weak area or whom you might ask to work with you to compliment your leadership gifts. The three aspects are vision, process/planning and administration:

- Vision

- ✓ Can you see beyond today's to-do list to where God is leading your church?
- ✓ Do you understand vision and the role it plays in motivating followers towards a clearly defined and preferred future?
- ✓ Have you sought from the Lord His preferred future for your church? His vision for your church?
- ✓ Have you communicated that vision to your leadership?
- ✓ How well have you communicated that vision?
- ✓ Do you have a leadership team that shares your vision for the church and is working with you to realize it?

- Process/Planning

Its one thing to have a vision, but the next step is equally important and that is the ability of the leader to clearly identify and communicate the steps necessary to realize the vision.

- ✓ How well do you do at drawing up workable plans to accomplish a task?

- ✓ How well do you work with others as a team to develop plans?
- ✓ Are you a good listener?
- ✓ Can you easily visualize your way through a problem in order to reach the desired conclusion?
- ✓ How well do you do at seeing the “big picture?”
- ✓ Do you often get caught up in the details of things and lose your perspective on the overall issue?

○ Administration

Once the vision has been clarified and communicated and the plan to realize that vision has been clearly outlined, then a good leader is able to set up the systems and manage the details of implementation.

- ✓ Do details bore you? If so, how do you handle it?
- ✓ Can you keep-up with the details of putting a plan into action?
- ✓ Do you often find yourself snowed-under with little jobs that need to be done?

○ So, which of these leadership traits is your weak link?

Experience has shown that every leader is weak in one of these three areas. Moses, for example, had an “A” in vision. But, when it came to the administration of details he needed some timely help from his father-in-law Jethro.

When we identify our leadership weakness, then we can focus our efforts on improving that area. In addition, you might need to ask the help of a Jethro in your congregation to help you in your area of weakness. One of the marks of a good leader is to know their weaknesses and proactively compensate for them.

I would suggest that you don’t take your leadership development for granted. Like our spiritual life, the life of the leader needs constant growth and attention. How about trying one of these ideas to improve your leadership quotient?

- ✓ Make a commitment to read at least one book a month on leadership development or on self-leadership.

- ✓ Attend at least one leadership development seminar each year.
- ✓ Find a mentor. Look for a Paul who can encourage, challenge and stretch you to be a better leader and servant of the King.
- ✓ Do you have a leader you really respect and admire? Make an appointment to interview them. Try and discover what the secret of their leadership success is.
- ✓ Refer to section Four and Empowering Leadership for some more ideas on how to strengthen your leadership quotient.

b. Church Check-up:

Once you have done a personal check-up then it's time to assess your church's health. The following steps should be followed carefully in order to maximize the entire process:

1. *Read the book by Christian Schwarz entitled, Natural Church Development.*

Read the whole thing. Cover to cover. You need to be the local expert on this new paradigm. Also, on completing your church profile you will also receive Schwarz's book called *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*. This book will offer complementary material to this implementation guide. Another extremely helpful resource that is well worth buying and having in your Church Health library is the workbook and tape set put together by Bob Logan entitled, *Releasing Your Church's Potential*. If you can get a hold of a copy – do.¹⁰

However, to start with, read the textbook on the topic – which is the purpose of this first and important step.

2. *Give the book ABC's of Natural Church Development to church board members and key leadership.*

This informative and easily read introduction to Natural Church Development will help build interest in this new church health paradigm among your key leadership.

3. *Gain board approval to do the church survey.*

You can't go down the road to improving church health alone. Your board must be with you. If they are not willing to check their health – then once you have the profile results, your church leadership will most likely not be willing to make the necessary investments to improve their health. So,

introduce NCD to your board and key leaders and get the green light to get the ball rolling.

4. Recruit up to 30 people to take the survey.

Practically speaking, any more than 30 is meaningless. In fact, if you send in 40 surveys, your local NCD partners will only take the first 30 anyway. Therefore, the following criteria should be used in selecting these 30 people. The criteria are listed in order of importance:

- a. Church leadership
- b. Involved in small group
- c. Active members representing the various demographic units in your church.

As you ask them to participate in taking the survey, let them know when and where it will be taken.

5. Pastor fills out pastor survey.

Do this in the privacy of your home or office. Complete it before the members fill in theirs so that you can experience the process and answer any questions they might have.

6. Members fill out their survey.

In filling out the members profile it is critical that the following guidelines are followed to insure the integrity of the whole process:

- a. *All 30 members should take the survey at the same time and in the same place.*

If you hand them out with instructions to bring them back the following week – forget it. You won't see half of them again. Doing it together also sets the scene that church health is a community concern.

- b. *Give the members some simple instructions on filling out the survey.*

- Briefly share with them what this profile will accomplish.
- Reassure them that the profile can be filled out in about 30 minutes.
- Encourage them to answer every question. There should be no unanswered questions.

- Encourage them to follow their first impressions when giving an answer. Usually the first answer to come to mind is the most accurate. In short, encourage them not to deliberate endlessly over any one question.
 - Instruct them as to where to place their completed surveys.
 - Finally, let them know when they will learn of the results of the survey.
- c. *The pastor should not be present while the members are taking the survey.*

The reason for this is that some members might feel intimidated or might feel less free to answer honestly if the pastor of the church is in the room “looking over their shoulders.” Even though the surveys are filled out anonymously, additional transparency will be generated if the Pastor is not present while the members are taking the survey.

- d. *Encourage honest and forthright answers.*

Believe it or not, I have received some surveys that one would assume were filled out by the church on the east side of the New Jerusalem. Almost all answers by almost all respondents were given in the extreme positive. These kinds of profiles are invalid and help no one. So, encourage your congregation to give honest and candid answers to the questions posed.

- e. *Collect all surveys and, along with the pastor's survey, send them to your local NCD processing center.*

In some cases the local processing center will be the national NCD partner (ChurchSmart Resources in the USA). In other cases it might be individual organizations with licensed permission to process NCD profiles (such as NADEI or your local Conference or Union office.)

2 STEP TWO: Tune-up

While the church awaits the return of the profile you can begin your Tune-up process. (The fact is that step two can even be started before the profile is administered.) A word about the purpose of this step might be in order. The more time that is spent to create an atmosphere that is open to change – the more successful will be your attempts at implementing Natural Church Development in the church. If you want to sing a new song – you'd better tune up your instrument

before you start! Here are some recommended steps for your church to take during this tune-up process:

a. Improve quality of pastoral care¹¹

This really has to do with building trust and improving communication. The more your members feel like they are being cared for and listened to, the more willing they will be to accept changes to improve church health. So, make a point to visit your members. Listen to their hopes and dreams for the church.

b. Preach a series on church health

This is your opportunity to teach about the importance of church health and the influence good or bad health has on the ability of the church to work in the harvest. Why not preach a series on the eight quality characteristics? Keep before the members the reason for health – to better equip us to reach the harvest and in turn bring honor and glory to God.

c. Set up a prayer ministry

Spiritual vitality is key to any success in implementing the principles outlined in the Natural Church Development paradigm. Spiritual life begins and ends on our knees. So, recruit a team of prayer warriors that will commit to pray for the church, its future and its health. Have them focus their prayers on the following issues:

- That the leadership of the church will receive a clear vision for the church
- That there will be a favorable climate for change in the congregation
- That the Lord will empower church leaders and members to not only develop a six-month plan to improve the church's minimum factor – but that they will have the strength to see it through
- That God will create a sense of urgency in the congregation – urgency to become a healthier community of believers
- That God will help build a sense of momentum in the congregation
- That the leadership will be enabled to deal constructively with any conflict
- For a spirit of unity and love in the congregation

“God works according to great principles which He has presented to the human family, and it is our part to mature wise plans, and to set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results.”
Ellen G. White

d. Identify strands of local tradition that can be affirmed

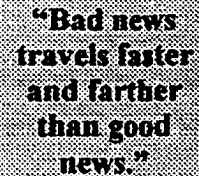
Once you have received the results of your church profile and know what your minimum factor is, look for areas of church life, traditions that will most likely not be affected by the upcoming implementation plans and affirm them. Draw attention to them. Highlight them. The reason for this is to make a clear statement that not everything will be changed. There are things that are working and deserve recognition and a time to celebrate their contribution to church life.

e. Identify influencers

The people who are respected and listened to in your church do not necessarily hold office. Of course, some do. It is important, however, to identify whom the influencers are so that when plans are being made to implement changes to address the minimum factor, these individuals can be consulted and brought on board from the start.

f. Create momentum

People like to be part of something that is in motion. They like belonging to a church that they believe is on the move! When people feel that progress is being made, the future is bright and full of potential – they are usually more willing to try new things. For this reason it is important that the Pastor and church leadership begin to build a sense of expectancy and a sense of momentum.



**"Bad news
travels faster
and farther
than good
news."**

The best way to do this is to celebrate all victories, whether they are large or small. Stand before the congregation and let them know when God answers prayer; when attendance is increasing; when Bible studies are being given. Interview members who are part of a ministry that is touching lives. Let your members stand and give testimony to the work of God in their lives. And every time a victory is celebrated, highlight the fact that God is at work in your church. This constant communication of God's work in the church creates a sense of expectancy and congregational momentum.

g. Institute a high-quality, redundant, internal communication system

It is a fact, bad news travels faster and farther than good news. For this very reason church leadership must be very deliberate to establish a good communication network that is redundant and of high quality. This kind of communication network can go a long way to help build momentum as well as ensure proper and timely dissemination of the church's vision, implementation plans as well as the church's progress in implementing them. Here are some examples of communication systems that most churches can set up:

- Announcements from the pulpit on Sabbath
- Church Bulletin or Bulletin insert announcement
- Church Newsletter
- Phone Committee
- Mailing List
- E-mail Newsletter
- Personal Visitation

h. Build wide circle of dissatisfaction with the status quo

The greatest reason churches are not healthier is that the membership is generally happy with the way things are. And so it is no surprise to know that the greatest hindrance to any planned change for the betterment of the church is a low level of dissatisfaction with how things are.

The NCD profile will help the church leadership begin the process of taking a real long look at the present reality in the church. Your task is to build on the survey. Talk about what God's ideal is and the differences between that ideal and the churches present condition. The larger the circle of people who are dissatisfied with the present condition of the church, the more willing hands and hearts church leadership will find to attempt new initiatives, ministries, paradigms, all offered with the hope of improving on the present.

i. Set-up a "Health for the Harvest Task Force"

I suggest that in preparation for the Change-up process, you set up an ad-hoc committee, an implementation team, appointed by the church board, to carry out the following crucial tasks:

- Analyze and carefully consider the implications of the church health profile
- Prayerfully and wisely design a six-month implementation plan to address your church's minimum factor
- Serve as the implementation team, monitoring the implementation plan for effectiveness as well as tweaking it when necessary to maximize its effectiveness

You could call this ad-hoc committee your Health for the Harvest Task Force. They would report to the board directly on any plans and initiatives. The board would have final say and would vote any plans into action.

Why is this step important? The fact is that in most cases standing committees are not as creative and productive as special task-force groups. There is a reason for this. Standing committees usually exist to protect and preserve a set of agreed to programs, ministries or policies. These committees are usually not as good at taking risks and thinking outside the box.

Therefore, why not have the church board setup a special Health for the Harvest Task Force? Make sure that among the members of this group are some or all of the following:

- Church Pastor
- Some key church board members
- Core ministry leaders
- Influencers
- Representatives from various age groups

In some cases it will be best to have the pastor chair the group. If the Pastor is not the chair, he/she should still be on the committee.

Make this a “lean, mean, creative machine!” If this group is too big, it will become cumbersome and non-productive. Also, it would be a good idea to leave a few “seats” open on the Health for the Harvest committee until you have received the survey and know what your minimum factor is. This way, you can add key people who could be especially helpful in creating an implementation plan to address a certain factor.

3. STEP THREE: *Change-up*

You’ve now visited the doctor and discovered that you have a high body-fat content. In addition, your cholesterol is high for your age. Your blood pressure is also a little elevated. The doctor lets you know in no uncertain terms that you need to improve your health. She recommends a low fat, low sodium diet (there goes the ice-cream and potato chips!) and an exercise program.

After a few days the news finally sinks in – you are not in the best of shape and you’d better do something about it or worst problems will inevitably follow. So, you decide you will take up swimming as your exercise and are determined to eat more natural foods. So, you go out and begin to stock your kitchen to cater to your new eating habits. You buy a juicer, a steamer for the veggies and other odds and ends. You also visit your local sport store and buy a new pair of swimming trunks, new goggles and a bag to carry all your gear in. You’ve now taken the appropriate steps to prepare yourself for your new life of health and vitality.

What has been described above is basically implementation steps one and two. Preparing yourself for a change in lifestyle however, does not mean anything has really changed. Making a daily schedule for exercise and a menu for your diet – and then sticking with it – that is where the proverbial rubber-meets-the-road! That is step three. Change-up. So, let's begin this step together.

a. Health for the Harvest Task Force develops *six-month* implementation strategy to address minimum factor

Planning ahead is a must. If you don't have a plan as to how your church will improve its congregational health – then you are in essence planning to fail. We suggest that the plan have the following components (see Appendix 2 for a sample form that your Task Force can use to develop your church's six-month plan.):¹²

- *Vision Based:*

For every action plan, describe how it will assist the church in achieving its God given vision. (If your church does not have a clear and compelling vision, please refer to the Functional Structures portion of Section Three). If the plan you want to implement will not help you achieve the vision of your church, then why do you want to put it into action in the first place?

- *Focus on Minimum Factor:*

Your implementation plan should focus at least 80% of its attention on the church's minimum factor. The other 20% could be focused on your second lowest score.

- *Utilize Biotic Principles:*

As you develop your implementation plans, always keep before you the Biotic Principles which help set God's growth automatisms loose in your church. Remember that the quality characteristics help you identify *what* area of church life needs to be strengthened, but the biotic principles will help you to know *how* best to do it. As you consider each plan ask these six key questions to make sure you are working in harmony with at least one of these fundamental principles:¹³

1. Interdependence:

Simple Definition: "The domino effect"

Definition: Your ministries are connected. What you do in one will affect the others in some shape or form. You can count on it. Cut the budget of one department and reallocate the funds to

another ministry or project and you're sure to feel the effect of the decision.

Biotic Question: "Are the long-term effects that this measure, step or decision has on other areas of the church organism beneficial for the healthy development of the church or not?"

2. **Multiplication:**

Simple Definition: "Be fruitful and multiply..."

Definition: Multiplication is the key to sustainable growth. Addition is too slow and cumbersome. If all ministry leaders, small group leaders – and even members of the church – were to conscientiously and intentionally seek to reproduce themselves, just think of how awesome it would be. Not only would our membership double each year (if every member brought one person to the Lord and to the church each year), but also church leadership, small groups, and funding, etc. would double in kind!

Biotic Question: "Does this measure, step or decision contain multiplication [reproduction] dynamics or is it merely about addition."

3. **Energy Transformation:**

Simple Definition: "Go with the flow"

Definition: Direct all energy used in the church towards church health. When faced with a wall of negativity, pessimism, or impossibility – remember God can intervene and fulfill the promise He made in Rom. 8:28. When He does, follow His lead, capitalize on His initiative for the good of the church. Watch for His intervention, and then ride the wave of His leading.

Biotic Question: "Is this measure, step or decision utilizing the energy relationships of the church environment, or trying to fight them?"

4. **Multi-Usage:**

Simple Definition: "Recycle!"¹⁴

**"All beginning
is difficult."**
Leith Anderson

Definition: Setting up processes that focus on maximizing the usefulness and usage of any resource spent in the church. In other words – look for ways in which money, time and people are most used most efficiently for the greatest good.

Biotic Question: “Do the results of this measure, step or decision show this ministry to be increasingly self-sustaining?”

5. Symbiosis:

Simple Definition: “Win-win solutions”

Definition: Win-win relationships. In our decisions, as often as possible, we should not be choosing between two mutually exclusive options – but rather we should try and think of how our decisions can mutually and positively affect other related or even non-related ministries or people in the church.

Biotic Question: “Does this measure, step or decision contribute to fruitful cooperation of different forms of ministry, or does it promote an ecclesiastical mono-culture?”

6. Functionality: “Why in the world...?”

Definition: Every ministry should have a present relevance in fulfilling the church’s mission and realizing its vision. Constant and honest evaluation of all that we do, say and believe will ensure that our church lives a life full of purpose and meaning. When we constantly ask “Why in the world are we doing such and such a ministry” – then we will maintain a high level of functionality.

Biotic Question: “Is the measure producing fruit for the kingdom of God, or is it missing its purpose?”

- *Measurable Objectives:*

Every good plan must have at least some measurable elements. This way, you know when you have arrived at your destination. Make sure that these objectives have to do with *quality* issues. For example, if your minimum factor is Gift-oriented ministry you could set a goal that within six months 50% of your active church members will be able to identify their primary spiritual gifts and that 30% of all church members would be actively involved in a ministry that matched their gifts. This goal seeks to improve the quality of your members ministry in the church, but you are measuring it in a tangible way.

It does little good to say, “at the end of six months we want our church to be more loving.” Who wouldn’t want that to happen? A qualitative, yet measurable objective for addressing a minimum factor of Loving Relationships would be to say; “in the next six months we will hold three social events where emphasis will be placed on building community and relationships.”

- *Time-line:*

This answers the question as to when this plan will take place? If it is a multi-stage plan, then when will each stage take place? What are the expected completion dates?

- *Responsibilities:*

This answers the question of who exactly is going to carry out the plan? Who are the players? If no one is ultimately responsible for the plan, or the various parts of the plan, it is doomed to fail from the start. Every action point should have someone’s name beside it as being responsible to see that it happens.

- *Check-points:*

It is important to have certain points along the way where you agree to stop and check your map; to make sure you’re on the right track or that you are on target. This time of evaluation is critical to insure that your plan doesn’t go off course or stall all together.

b. Church board approves the plan

Once your Health for the Harvest Task Force has done its work, then it is time to bring the final plan back to the board for their approval. It is important to state clearly at this point that if most of the board knows nothing about the content of the implementation plan until the day it arrives at the board – there could be big problems.

Many of your board members should be on your Task Force. As the Task Force has been meeting it is imperative that the Pastor and other leaders network with church members and board members to get their feedback on some of the plans under consideration. (For a very good model on how best to communicate and interface with membership and key leadership in the process of developing an implementation plan, please refer to Appendix 3)

The principle here is – “no surprises.” When the plan comes to the board for approval, it should basically be a matter of a formality.

c. Church in business session approves implementation plan

Why is this a good idea? It comes down to communication and buy-in. The more the whole church knows about your implementation plan, the more they feel the plan belongs to them the more successful the whole process will be. You could even make this session and approval process a launching event! Make it a spiritual event – focused on church health and the harvest.

d. Dealing with Conflict

- *Different Kinds of Conflict:*

Conflict is likely, but not inevitable. You should know this and expect it and do all you can to minimize it. However, church leadership should also understand the difference between what Herrington, Bonem and Furr call “*Life-threatening conflict*” and “*Life-giving conflict*.”¹⁵

Life-threatening conflict occurs when people lose sight of their calling in Christ. They are murmuring simply out of selfishness and ambition. The grumbling heard at various times of the Exodus could be classified under this category. In the end, these troublemakers left the camp or were put out by force.

In contrast, life-giving conflict provides an opportunity for responsive leadership to make deserved adjustments to the original plan that, in the end will strengthen the church and bring greater honor and glory to God. The story told in Acts 6 is a good example of this kind of life-giving conflict.

So, when faced with conflict, church leadership should pray for a discerning heart to ascertain what kind of conflict is actually taking place.

It is also helpful to spend some time before the implementation plan is announced to the church-at-large to test the waters to see what if any conflict might be looming around the corner. As the saying goes, “an ounce of prevention...”

- *Pace of Change:*

As the Health for the Harvest Task Force draws up a six-month implementation plan, think carefully as to how fast you will be introducing the changes suggested. In some churches the climate is ripe for quick and aggressive changes. However, in most churches the Task Force might want to consider a slower, multi-phase approach to implementing change.

- *Strategies for Change:*

Finally, when implementing a plan that is radically different from the present state of things you might consider one of the following conflict-defusing strategies:

1. Pilot Initiatives:

In this scenario the leadership of the church would introduce the initiative in question as basically an experiment that will last a certain amount of time and then receive a thorough evaluation as to its effectiveness.

2. Parallel Ministries:

In this scenario an initiative that might displace an existing program or ministry is introduced to run on parallel tracks to the present program, thus allowing members to compare and contrast.¹⁶

4. STEP FOUR *Follow-up*

Now that the implementation plan has been prayerfully designed by your Health for the Harvest Task Force, and the church board has in like manner approved it, the fun really begins! A well thought-out plan, written out and approved by a committee means very little in terms of observable improvement in your overall church health. Implementing the plan is where much work and careful follow-up are needed. Therefore, this step is just as critical, if not more so, than all the previous ones.

In this step you will want to carryout the following initiatives. First you must decide on who will steer the implementation process over the next few months. Then, a clear and creative communication plan must be set up to let the church know how the implementation process is coming along. It will also be important to follow the agreed upon plan carefully and to, finally, be ready to begin the whole process all over again. A healthy church will be in a constant cycle of evaluation, planning and implementation.

a. Steering Committee

The issue here is answering the question, “Who will be overseeing the implementation process?” Yes, you have assigned responsibilities. Time-lines have been mapped out. But, who will make sure to keep the whole process accountable?

In most Adventist churches this responsibility will fall on the board. In some churches, the board might request that the Health for the Harvest Task Force

continue the process of administering the implementation process in cooperation with the pastor. No matter. The concern here is that there be *somebody* that is responsible for overseeing the entire implementation process.

b. Communicate, Communicate

As you recall, during the Tune-up stage of the implementation process, it was recommended that a high-quality, redundant internal communication system be set up. Now is the time to put that system to real good use. On multiple occasions and using various formats, communicate with the church what the implementation plan is. Then, as often as possible (at least once a month), let the church know how things are going. Celebrate victories; interview people who have received a special blessing due to the changes implemented because of NCD; petition the church for prayer. Communicate, communicate, and communicate again!

"The future of any size church is the sum of its next moves."
Gary McIntosh

c. Plan Your Work and Work Your Plan

A robotic approach to working your plan won't do – especially since we are implementing an organic, biotic approach to church growth. Flexibility is a must. However, don't bend too much! If you make too many changes to your plan, then in actuality you really have no plan at all. Therefore, work the plan. When checkpoints come along for evaluation, evaluate with vigor and integrity. Hold people accountable for what they have agreed to do.

As Bob Logan says, a leader and trainer in the NCD paradigm, it is not only important to start well, but to finish well. Excellence and attention to quality should not only characterize your church's first implementation steps, these qualities should also permeate the whole implementation process – all the way to the finish line! Why? Because we should offer nothing but the best we can offer to our creator God and savior Jesus!

d. Start All Over Again:

Yes, you read it correctly. After you have successfully implemented your six-month implementation plan, it's time to evaluate your church's health again. It's time to start with step one – Check-up. You will then be able to evaluate the impact your implementation plan has had on your minimum factor. Once you have completed a second profile, send it in and received the results, it's time to develop yet another plan to address the new minimum factor.

After you have completed this cycle twice, then I recommend that you enter into a yearly cycle of planning and assessment.



SECTION THREE: WHAT STEPS DO I NEED TO TAKE TO IMPROVE MY CHURCH'S MINIMUM FACTOR?

This section is meant to serve in the role of a consultant for your church. Each Quality Characteristic is dealt with from the singular vantage point of helping you – a Seventh-day Adventist church – better understand what this characteristic is all about and, most importantly, analyze how you are addressing it now, and what you can do to improve it in the future. Each quality characteristic is divided into six sections:

a. In a Nutshell:

This section tries to capture the heart of this characteristic in just a few sentences.

b. Biblical Support:

This section provides Scripture references that clearly support the importance of the health characteristic under discussion.

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

As the title implies, this section's purpose is to demonstrate support found in the writings of Ellen G. White for the particular characteristic under review.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

Questions have a way of helping us clarify issues. The purpose of this section is to ask a number of questions that deal directly with your minimum factor with the hope that in the process of answering them in your local church context, areas of weakness and strength will be highlighted and possible future action plans can be developed.

The questions in this section are best answered by the pastor in concert with a group of committed leaders. Maybe it will be an informal group, or your church board. Ideally, though, the best group to prayerfully and honestly review the questions that pertain to your minimum factor will be your Health for the Harvest Task Force.

e. Five Action Steps:

The purpose of this section is not to provide the answers to your health problems. No, these action steps serve more as a starting point. Look over the suggested action steps and see if any of them could be adjusted and used in your local church setting. In the end, each church will have its own action plan that will best answer and address its unique circumstances. So, if you can use any of these suggestions – great.

f. Resources:

The purpose of this section is to recommend some further reading that you might find helpful in improving your church's minimum factor.

1. *Empowering Leadership:*

a. **In a Nutshell:**

Empowering leadership is about clarifying an engaging mission and vision for the church and then ensuring that church leaders at every level invests themselves in equipping others to help achieve the stated mission and vision.

b. **Biblical Support:**

- “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teacher, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
Ephesians 4:11-12
- “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
2 Timothy 2:2

c. **Spirit of Prophecy Support:**

- “Ministers should not do the work which belongs to the church, thus wearying themselves and preventing others from performing their duty. They should teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.” *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 291.
- “The plans which have been suggested by our brother, I believe to be sound; and if we practice something in this line in the several churches with which we are connected, we shall find that those churches that carry out a system of labor, educating and training all to do something for the Master, will be living churches; for a working church is a living church.” *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 6 November 1888.
- “The best help that ministers can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others. Help all to see that as receivers of the grace of Christ they are under obligation to work for Him. And let all be taught how to work. Especially should those who are newly come to the faith be educated to become laborers together with God.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, 82.

**“Great leaders gain
authority by giving it
away.”**
*Admiral James B.
Stockdale*

- “It is this kind of discipline that has been sadly neglected in many of our churches. The time and labor of our ministers have not been spent in the manner best calculated to keep the churches in a healthy, growing condition. If less time had been spent in sermonizing, and far more in educating the people to work intelligently, there would now be many more to enter the broad field as missionaries, and much more talent to be put to use in the various branches of the work.” *Review and Herald, August 24, 1886.*

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- ***Delegation of Authority***

1. What amount of time and energy does church leadership spend to train and equip members for the work of ministry?
2. What is the pastor doing now that could be delegated?
3. What are department leaders doing to recruit new people to serve as leadership in their ministry areas?
4. What demotivators exist in the church for membership involvement in the church?¹⁷
5. Are there any power-hoarders in the church? If so, how best can these individuals be dealt with constructively?

**“Talk of
empowering the
laity must always
be followed by
asking,
‘empowering for
what?’”**
*Norman &
Gustave*

- ***Communication of Vision and Mission***

1. Does leadership have a clear vision for the church? Has it been written down and communicated with the membership?
2. How often does the Pastor spend a day or maybe two envisioning and doing planning with your church's key leaders?
3. How is the vision of the church communicated with the Elders? With the board? With the Church at large?
4. How many venues and avenues does church leadership have to communicate the vision with the church? Write these avenues down – can you add any new ones? Strengthen any existing ones?
5. What role do the Elders and other church leaders have in developing the vision and mission for the church? What role do they plan in communicating the vision and mission with the church?
6. What role does vision casting play in empowering your leaders and members?

- *Leadership Development*

1. How are people trained for their ministry and service in the church?

**"Effective pastors
today don't push
the sheep, they pull
them."
Gary McIntosh**

2. How is the Pastor being re-charged for more effective leadership in the church?
3. How often does the Pastor attend upgrading seminars on church ministry and growth?
4. How much time does the Pastor spend mentoring other leaders in the church?
5. How often does the Pastor take another member and/or leader with them on visitation, Bible studies or other ministry activities?
6. Do members involved in ministry have a clear, written job description? Does this job description include accountability lines and time commitments and expectations?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Read a Book

Today is as good a day as ever to make a commitment to becoming a better leader. And the best way to start this learning process is to pick up one of the many books available on the market on becoming a more competent and effective leader.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next six months, the Pastor will read three books on leadership and will recommend one book on leadership to the key leadership in the

church. Consider starting by reading John Maxwell's book entitled, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.

2. Become a Leader/Trainer

As a Pastor, your time is always in demand. Make a commitment to proactively allocate at least 20% of your time and energy to equipping the leadership in your church.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next six months I will spend the equivalent of at least a day per week in mentoring and training leaders.
- In the next six months I will not make a hospital visit or give a Bible study without a church member with me.
- I will prayerfully identify one key leader with whom I can begin a mentoring relationship over the next six months.
- Over the next six months, I will emphasize leadership training in my leadership meetings.

3. Discover a Vision

A vision for the church rarely if ever comes from a committee. It usually comes from a leader who then fleshes it out with a trusted leadership team. In the case of the church, this vision must come from the pastor. If you don't have a vision of what the Lord desires your church to become in the next five years, now is the time to seek for it. Remember that a vision is a picture. A visual description of what you hope and believe the future of your church will look like.

Measurable Objectives:

- I will make it a point to pray daily for God to give me a clear picture of what His preferred future for our church is.
- Over the next six months I will begin to share the vision informally with key leadership with an open heart to hear what God might be saying through their feedback. (Also check out Appendix 2 for a model on how to develop a vision statement).
- I will carefully synthesize the vision in a written statement and share it with the leadership of the church with faith and boldness.

"The saddest thing in the world is people who can see, but have no vision."
Helen Keller

4. Communication, Communication

Remember the axiom that says, “Bad news travels faster and farther than good news.” In addition, there is nothing that is more frustrating to ministry leadership and to membership than a lack of communication in the church. For these reasons, make a deliberate effort to implement a good communication system in your church.

Measurable Objectives:

- If your church does not have an active telephone committee, in the next six months start one. Use it to communicate church victories, prayer requests and relevant news.
- The Internet is the quickest way to communicate in our day and age. In the next six months, get the email addresses of all the members in the church and using your email program, pre-set certain mailing groups with which you can communicate pertinent information. Touch base with your leaders briefly and repeatedly.
- Make sure that at least once a month you have a leadership huddle where you can discuss ministry concerns, take course readings on each ministry’s contribution towards reaching the churches stated mission and vision. During these huddles, plans should also be made to insure that the proper and needed training is being given to equip members for their work of ministry.

5. Seek out a Personal Mentor/Coach

This action step could change your life. Entering into an accountable relationship with a respected peer or older church Pastor or leader can be extremely challenging and rewarding. Seek one out. Ask this person to help you be a better leader and Christian. This Paul-Timothy kind of relationship is all but lost in our circles. Make it your objective this next six months to find such a mentor.

f. Resources:

Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.

Jones, Laurie Beth. *Jesus C.E.O.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Malphurs, Aubrey. *Value-Driven Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996.

Maxwell, John. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.

McIntosh, Gary. *One Size Doesn't Fit All*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1999.

Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.

White, Ellen G. *Pastoral Ministry*. Silver Springs, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995.

2. Gift-oriented Ministry:**a. In a Nutshell:**

When members serve the Lord in their area of giftedness they are happier, are more likely to be fruitful, are healthier and enjoy their ministries for a longer time.

b. Biblical Support:

- “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” *Ephesians 4:11-12.*
- “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” *1 Peter 4:10*
- “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...” *Romans 12:6*
- “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ... Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” *1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-6.*

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “The perfection of the church depends not on each member being fashioned exactly alike. God calls each one to take his proper place, to stand in his lot to do his appointed work according to the ability which has been given him.” *Letter 19, 1901.*
- “Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted... There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example.” *Ministry of Healing, 148-149.*
- “The greatest cause of our spiritual feebleness as a people is the lack of real faith in spiritual gifts. If they all received this kind of testimony in full faith, they would put from them those things which displease God, and would

everywhere stand in union and in strength. And three-fourths of the ministerial labor now expended to help the churches could then be spared to the work of raising up churches in new fields." *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 14 January 1868.

- "Let the hand of God work the clay for His own service. He knows just what kind of vessel He wants. To every man He has given his work. God knows what place he is best fitted for. Many are working contrary to the will of God, and they spoil the web." *Lift Him Up*, 65.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Spiritual Gift Understanding**

1. Do the members of the church understand what spiritual gifts are all about?
2. Do your members know what their primary spiritual gift is?
3. Are members placed in positions of leadership and ministry based on their spiritual gifts?
4. Does the Nominating Committee consider Spiritual Gifts when selecting new officers?
5. How do members in your church discover their spiritual gifts?
6. How often do you provide spiritual gift discovery classes or events?

7. How often do you preach on the importance of spiritual gifts in the local church body?
8. Is your Nominating Committee a standing committee, which continually finds, fills and makes personnel changes as necessary based on the spiritual gifts of your members?
9. Do you know who in your church has the gift of evangelism? If so, are they working in their area of giftedness?
10. What percentage of your active church membership is involved in some kind of ministry in the church?

- **Ministry Training and Follow-up**

1. Who follows up with members after they have been elected to fill a ministry vacancy? Are they ever asked if they are satisfied with their ministry?
2. What kind of training do members receive to prepare them for ministry?
3. How do new members discover their spiritual gifts and become active in ministry for the Lord?

4. If problems arise, a member is dissatisfied in their ministry position, how is it handled? Who handles it?
5. Are their clear job-descriptions written up for each ministry position including accountability structures, expected time commitments, etc.?
6. How do ministry participants keep the vision of the church before them?

- **Joy of Service**

1. Do members in your church have a sense of joy in their service to God?
2. How can you gauge your member's "joy in service" quotient?
3. Does the church have opportunity to hear testimonies of how God has blessed them in the use of their spiritual gifts?

e. Five Action Steps:

As you develop your six-month strategic plan to address your minimum factor consider including some or all of these action steps.

1. Teach Gift-Oriented Ministry

In the next six months preach a series of sermons on the joy of gift-oriented ministry. If you have small groups operating in your church, follow-up this

series of sermons by developing a curriculum for your small groups to help them learn more about spiritual gifts.

Measurable Objectives:

- Preach a two part series on the Healthy Church, covering the eight quality characteristics.
- Preach a 4-part series of sermons on Spiritual Gifts and Gift-Oriented Ministry
- Find or develop a 4-week small group curriculum to teach Gift-Oriented ministry.

2. Spiritual Gift Discovery Process

In the next six months set up various opportunities for your members to discover their spiritual gifts.

Measurable Objectives:

- By the end of six months at least 75% of your active membership will have attended a gift-discovery seminar and identified their primary gifts.
- In the next six months conduct at least two spiritual gift discovery seminars.

3. Train Gift Counselor(s)

Depending on the size of your church, recruit and train one gift-counselor for every 30 adult members. The counselor will be responsible to meet with every member who has gone through the Gift-Discovery process and help them identify a ministry in which they can best use their spiritual gifts.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next six-months recruit _____ gift counselors and train and equip them for service.
- In the next six-months have every member who has completed the Spiritual Gift discovery process meet with the gift counselor and identify an area for them to minister in.

4. Implement a Spiritual-Gift Driven Nominating Process

Working closely with your key leaders, develop a process of nominating and placing members into ministry positions based on their spiritual gifts. One idea is to use the church board as a standing nominating committee (which is allowed by the Church Manual). Have the church board set up a Gift-Oriented Ministry sub-committee that makes recommendations to the board and later to the church body on ministry positions based on the members' spiritual gifts.

This committee will operate year-around. The Gift-Counselor(s) will sit on this committee as well as the Pastor and an Elder. Positions can be filled for a two-year period, with quarterly reviews conducted by the Gift-Counselor(s). This review process provides opportunity for continuous gift counseling – which is very important for the overall effectiveness of this process.

Measurable Objectives:

- By the end of six months we will have elected a standing sub-committee of the church board to place members in ministry based on their spiritual gifts. Nominations will go to the church board and then on to the Church at large as per the Church Manual.
- At the end of 6 months at least 40% of the active membership will be working actively in ministry in their area of giftedness.

5. Cut the Fat

A church can easily become an activity trap. In order for members not to be stretched too thin, make sure to evaluate all ministries and cut out, trim down or re-direct the ministries that are not helping the church grow more and better disciples of Christ.

Measurable Objectives:

- By the end of six months all ministries and programs in the church will be evaluated in terms of their contribution to the church's stated mission and vision. (It would be helpful if during this process you could invite a trusted person from outside the church to help with this evaluation process. Sometimes an outside view can provide a clearer picture of what really is happening.)
- All programs and ministries that do not meet the above stated criteria would be closed down, downsized or re-focused.

f. Resources:

Bugbee, Bruce, Don Cousins and Bill Hybels. *Connections*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 1996. (Can be ordered from www.creativeministry.org)

Burrill, Russell. *Revolution in the Church*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993.

Ford, Paul R. *Unleash Your Church*. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001.

_____. *Discovering Your Ministry Identity*. Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001.

Folkenberg, Robert Jr. and David Kobliska. *Giftabilities*. Copies available from authors. Email address: bob3aud@cumsda.org

Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994.

3. *Passionate Spirituality:*

a. In a Nutshell:

The key word is “passionate.” Ellen White often called it “ardent” spirituality. A healthy church is in love with Christ and willing to live out that commitment in their every-day life.

b. Biblical Support:

- “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.” *Mark 12:30*
- “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” *Luke 16:13*
- “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” *Romans 6:22*.
- “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” *Romans 12:1*

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “Be a witness for Christ. Exemplify the strength of the Christian’s hope, which is cast into that within the vail. Reveal that the anchor holds you under all circumstances. Let your home be made pleasant and cheerful. Jesus—you must rely on Jesus every moment. Draw your strength from Jesus. He will give you that which you ask in sincerity. If you seek Him with your whole heart He will be found of you.” *Manuscript Releases, vol. 3, 370*.
- “Let ministers teach church-members that in order to grow in spirituality, they must carry the burden that the Lord has laid upon them—the burden of leading souls into the truth.” *Gospel Workers, 200*.
- “When we have an assurance, which is bright and clear, of our own salvation, we shall exhibit cheerfulness and joyfulness, which becomes every follower of Jesus Christ. The softening, subduing influence of the

“We want our members to become the Michael Jordan’s of Christianity. We want them to become impact players, in their work, in their homes, and in their neighborhoods.” Paul Johnson

love of God brought into practical lives will make impressions upon minds that will be a savor of life unto life.” *Evangelism*, 630-631.

- “Sanctification through the Holy Spirit binds up man’s will and purpose with the will and purpose of God. If we have not these features in our experience, the church will be sickly and feeble.” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, 191.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Personal Spiritual Disciplines**
 1. How would you describe the temperature of your congregation’s spiritual life?
 2. How would you describe the daily practice of prayer, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines in your church?
 3. How would you describe the spiritual commitment exhibited by your congregation in the returning of tithes and giving of offerings?
 4. How often are the spiritual disciplines highlighted, taught and encouraged in your church?
 5. How often are the spiritual disciplines highlighted, taught and encouraged in the small group life of your church?
 6. What role does the Pastor and other church leaders play in modeling the practice of spiritual disciplines to the congregation?

- **Corporate Spirituality**

1. Does the church have an active and functional prayer ministry? If so, how does this ministry impact the members?
2. What role does prayer play in your corporate worship? Is it an inspirational experience?
3. What role do personal testimonies play in your corporate worship?
4. What communication systems are in place in your church to communicate the work of God in the life of your church?
5. How does your church deal with a member who persists in a known sin?

- **Discipleship Focus**

1. What training opportunities are available for church members to learn about spiritual disciplines?
2. What role does the study of the Spirit of Prophecy play in the spiritual life of your membership?

**"Any church, however orthodox its doctrine and its view of the Bible may be, can hardly expect to grow if it does not learn to live its faith with passion."
Christian Schwarz**

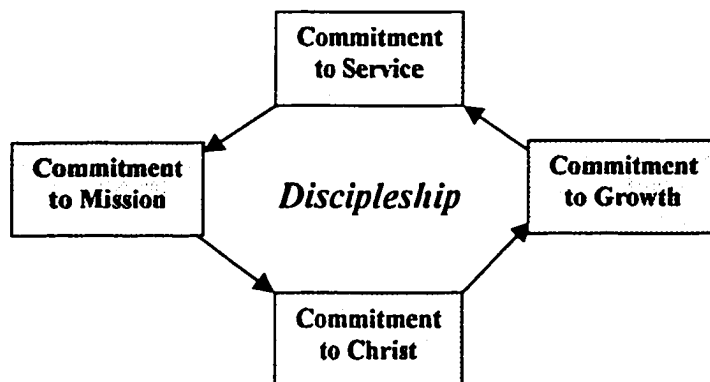
3. Has the church leadership encouraged the congregation to read and meditate on some of the writings of Ellen White?
4. Do your members understand what are the benchmarks of a quality Christian life? Do they know what a disciple of Christ looks like?
5. Does your church have a clear strategy on how to disciple the members of the church? What are your spiritual expectations for maturing disciples?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Set-up a Discipleship Track

In partnership with your core leaders, discuss what are the benchmarks of a mature Christian. Then develop a curriculum, and a series of training events that will help your members develop into what you have carefully described to be a mature Christian. Don't leave discipleship to chance. Plan for it, then resource and work the plan.

An example of this kind of pro-active approach to Christian discipleship can be seen in Rick Warren and Saddleback Community Church's discipleship plan.¹⁸ They envision every member traveling around a baseball diamond of growth. It looks something like this:



Measurable Objectives

- In the next six months we will meet as a group of leaders and identify the benchmarks of a mature and growing Christian.
- In the next six months we will design a process to teach the identified virtues and practices of a growing and mature Christian to every member of our church.

2. Begin a Prayer Ministry

If you don't have an active prayer ministry going – now is the time to start one. In your visitation, and maybe during your spiritual gifts discovery seminars you will discover those who have a burden for interceding in prayer on behalf of others. Recruit these individuals to be the core of your prayer ministry.

Set up a way for the congregation to communicate their needs to the prayer ministry team as well as a means for answered prayer to be shared with the congregation so that all might rejoice in the grace of God.

Measurable Objectives:

- Set up a prayer ministry team that will continually pray for the needs of the church. At the top of their prayer list should be the spiritual development of the members of the church. Have the prayer team meet weekly and communicate weekly with the Pastors as well.
- Set aside a time each month when you emphasize the importance of prayer in the life of the church. Invite members of the prayer team to share their experiences in prayer.

3. Reading the Desire of Ages

Ellen White encourages us to spend a thoughtful hour in contemplation of the life and final ministry of Christ on the cross. There is not a more inspirational book on the life and ministry of Christ than the *Desire of Ages*. The reading of this book has brought spiritual renewal to many who were seeking a deeper walk with Jesus.

Measurable Objectives:

- Set-up a six month devotional reading plan for your members that combines related Scripture passages and chapters from the book *Desire of Ages*.
- If you have small groups, encourage the groups to use the book *Desire of Ages* as their study curriculum for the next six month.
- Highlight inspirational passages from the book in your bulletin and newsletters.

4. Testimony Meetings

The power of the personal testimony is incontrovertible. It carries with it the conviction of experience. Testimonies of how the power of God has been at work in the lives of members and in the church should often be heard in the church. It can't help but deepen the spiritual commitment of those who testify and those who listen.

Measurable Objectives:

- At least once a month, during your "Church News" time, or announcement time invite one or two members to share their personal testimonies. Make sure to coach these individuals as to how much time they each have. Encourage them to take the time to write out their testimonies ahead of time, thus helping them organize their thoughts for the greatest impact.
- Feature a testimony in your monthly newsletter, or maybe even once a month as a bulletin insert.
- Don't be afraid to lead the congregation in prayer or in worship during these times of testimonies. Let the Spirit lead you as worship leader, in reacting appropriately to the testimonies given.

5. Spiritual Retreat

It is good for people to leave the common and ordinary routines of life and go away to a quiet place for a time of spiritual renewal. Why not plan a spiritual retreat for those interested in your church.

Measurable Objectives:

- Using some of the resources listed below, during the next six months plan a weekend spiritual retreat where emphasis is placed on the times of solitude, prayer and corporate worship.

- When the retreat is finished, make sure that you take some time to evaluate what happened as well as allow for the members who participated in the retreat a time and place to share with the church what the weekend meant to them personally.

f. Resources:

Brown, Steve. *Approaching God: How to Pray*. Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1996.

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1988.

Gugliotto, Lee J. *Handbook for Bible Study*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995.

_____. *Prayer*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1992.

Job, Rueben P., Norman Shawchuck. *A Guide to Prayer*. Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1989.

Ortberg, John. *The Life You've Always Wanted*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.

Willard, Dallas. *Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Churches That Pray*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997.

4. Functional Structures:

a. In a Nutshell:

Functional structures are all about making sure that systems, programs, traditions and ministries are working optimally in achieving a well-defined purpose and/or objective. You could say it's all about every ministry having both a meaningful operational system and mission. If one of these two is missing – the ministry, or for that matter, the church will most likely be adrift in the mundane and routine.

b. Biblical Support:

- “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” *Ephesians 4:11-12*.
- “Let everything be done decently and in order.” *1 Corinthians 14:40*
- “So when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, ‘what is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening? ... The thing that you do is not good....’ You shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth...and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times... So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.” *Exodus 18:14-22*.

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “Satan is ever working to have the service of God degenerate into dull form and become powerless to save souls. While the energy, earnestness, and efficiency of the workers become deadened by the efforts to have everything so systematic, the taxing labor that must be done by our ministers to keep this complicated machinery in motion engrosses so much time that the spiritual work is neglected. And with so many things to run, this work requires so large an amount of means that other branches of the work will wither and die for want of due attention.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 4, 602.
- “God works according to great principles which He has presented to the human family, and it is our part to mature wise plans, and to set in operation the means whereby God shall bring about certain results.” *Evangelism*, 653.

- “God designed that organized effort should cooperate with the Holy Spirit, remembering always that it is His power which does the work.” *Desire of Ages*, 362.
- “I learn that it is proposed by some of our brethren to do away with the organization of some at least of the branches of our work. No doubt what has led them to propose this step is that in some of our organizations the machinery has been made so complicated as really to hinder the work. This, however, is not an argument against organization, but against the perversion of it.” *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 29, 1893.
- “Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels...cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 649.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Vision and Mission**
 1. What is the mission statement of your church? Has it been written down, voted on and communicated fully, creatively and repeatedly to the congregation?
 2. Does your membership know what your church is all about?
 3. Can your members articulate the heart or core of your mission in a sentence or less?
 4. What is the vision of your church? In other words, five years from now, what will your church look like? What is God’s preferred future for

your church? What will it look like in five years if God has His way with your church?

5. What have you done to help the church buy-into that vision?
6. What kind of strategic planning do you do in your church? Who participates? How are these plans communicated with the church? What relationship do these plans have with your vision?
7. Do all the departments and ministries in the church have a clear plan to help the church realize the vision of the church?
8. What are your shared values as a church? Have they been written down? What role do they play in your decision making process?
9. What role does your mission and vision play in developing your yearly budget?

- **Organization Factors**

1. Do you have a clear organizational chart for your church, which includes all ministries and personnel?

2. Do your church members understand how your church is organized?
Who does what and when?
3. Are there designated leaders for each ministry?
4. Are there designated associate leaders being trained for future growth and multiplication?
5. Are there regularly scheduled and meaningful leadership huddles with all ministry leaders?
6. How many people report directly to the pastor?
7. “Describe the flow of people coming into your church through your various ministries. How do they get connected in a way that makes them feel a part of the church community and allows them to contribute to the community? Where are there breaks in the flow where people might ‘dead-end’ or get derailed before becoming fully assimilated?
8. “Describe the decision-making process for major decisions and minor decisions?”¹⁹
9. What kind of orientation is given to new church board members in terms of the purpose, function and decision-making process of the board?

10. Are decisions made in the board or other committees clearly written down and responsibility for follow-up assigned to specific individuals?

- **Adaptability**

1. What role does tradition play in your church?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being a church that is not willing to change at all – never!” and a 10 being the opposite, how open would you say your church is to change?
3. What kinds of changes have taken place in the past 2 years? How were these changes received?
4. What kind of pro-active process is the church following in order to prepare the leadership and membership for constructive changes to improve church health?

- **Leadership Training**

1. What kind of ongoing leadership training does the Pastor receive?
2. Does the Pastor enjoy a coaching/mentoring relationship with someone outside the membership of the local church?

3. What leadership training is provided to existing and emerging leaders in the church?
4. Do the members of the church board understand their unique leadership role in the local church?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Develop a clear Mission and Vision and set of Values

If your church does not have a clear Mission statement and vision statement, then this is the place to start.

Aubrey Malphurs defines a Mission Statement as a “broad, brief, biblical statement of what the ministry is supposed to be doing.” A vision, on the other hand, is a visual picture of what the future of the church will look like. In other words, if your church were to passionately pursue its mission – what would the outcome look like? You could also think of a vision as God’s preferred future for your church.

“In my view, nothing is properly defined until you write it down. Writing forces you to be specific; it takes the fuzz off your thinking.”
Aubrey Malphurs

You might want to use these diagnostic questions in helping you arrive at your mission.

- “What is this church supposed to be doing?”
- What is this church doing?
- Why are you not doing what you are supposed to be doing?
- What will it take for you to change and do what you are supposed to be doing?”²⁰

Measurable Objectives:

- As the Pastor of the church, over the next few months, take some time to ask God to give you a clear vision for your church. Answer the question, what will this church look like five years from now? Share this vision with key leadership and allow their input to sharpen it even further. Then, take the time to write the vision down in a way that will communicate it succinctly but yet fully. Then begin to share it with your church leaders, church board and membership at large. (For a helpful definition of what a vision and mission are as well as the steps to develop a vision please refer to *Appendix 3*).
- Over the next six months work with the leadership of the church to develop a clear and concise mission statement for your church. When it is complete, share it with the church continuously and creatively.
- Take time over the next six months to clarify what values are truly important for you and your church. As with your vision and mission – write these down and constantly use them to guide your decisions and actions.
- Consider filling out the helpful Vision tree found in *Appendix 4*.

2. Set-up an on-going Evaluation Process

Once you have a clear mission and vision, then its time to evaluate all your ministries in light of these statements. Are they helping the church achieve its stated mission and vision? Is it draining valuable resources from other more mission-driven ministries?

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next six months invite three people (one of which will be the Pastor) who are not in the leadership of the ministry or program to be evaluated, to evaluate each ministry and service in the church.

Bob Logan suggests that after you evaluate a ministry you will have a number of options. You might find these suggestions helpful.

1. Removing:

You might discover some ministries that are not contributing in any way, shape or form to the mission or vision of the church. They are dead weight. The only option is to remove them. However painful it might be, you will need to close them down.

“The central idea of a leader is standing before people and leading them in some direction.”
Gary McIntosh

2. Pruning:

Some ministries will need to be cut back in order to help them realize their full potential.

3. Shaping:

Some ministries just need a little tweaking on an ongoing basis. This is what shaping is all about.

4. Cultivating:

Other ministries are still viable. In fact they might be extremely important in the process of realizing the vision of the church. However, at the moment the ministry needs help. Bob Logan suggests that training, additional resources and coaching will act like a good fertilizer to increase the overall fruitfulness and effectiveness of the ministry.

5. Reproducing:

One of the “vital signs” you will want to watch out for during the evaluation process is to see if there is a conscious and effective procedure in place to train and raise up new leaders for that particular ministry and in turn for the church. Multiplication of leaders assures a healthy reproduction and growth in each and every ministry structure.

3. Begin Regular Leadership Meetings

Meetings without a purpose are a waste of precious time. However, regularly scheduled meetings with your key leadership team in which time is set aside for progress reports and feedback as well as time for re-casting the vision and building teamwork are worth their weight in gold.

Measurable Objective:

- Starting on _____ we will begin monthly Leadership Huddle meetings. Those who will be invited to attend are:

4. Leadership Training

The role of leadership in promoting and maintaining church health cannot be overemphasized. Empowering leadership, servant leadership, competent leadership is at the heart of a church's ability to multiply and grow. Therefore, deliberate leadership training is essential if structures are to become and remain functional.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next few months, recommend a book on leadership for your leaders to read. After a few weeks, schedule a time to review the book together.
- Invite an outside leadership expert to come to your church and hold a leadership seminar.
- During the next six months, identify one or two leaders in the church, which you – as Pastor – can mentor in a more specific way. Spend time with them. Bring them with you on visits, Bible studies, etc. Teach them what you know about leadership. Read other leadership books together and compare notes and discuss what you've learned.

5. Build a Communication Super-highway

As we mentioned above, bad news travels farther and faster than good news. Therefore, study exactly how news is communicated in your church and set out to improve on it – ten fold! Often, people assume others know what is happening. Don't assume anything. Create a reliable, redundant and effective communication super-highway. This will help you communicate in a timely fashion large and small victories, challenges and most importantly, the mission and vision of the church.

- If your church does not have an active telephone committee, in the next six months start one. Use it to communicate church victories, prayer requests and relevant news.
- The Internet is the quickest way to communicate in our day and age. In the next six months, get the email addresses of all the members in the church and using your email program, pre-set certain mailing groups with which you can communicate pertinent information. Touch base with your leaders briefly and repeatedly.
- Make sure that at least once a month you have a leadership huddle where you can discuss ministry concerns, take course readings on each ministry's contribution towards reaching the church's stated mission and vision.

f. Resources:

- Maxwell, John. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.
- Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996.
- Herrington, Jim, Mike Bonem, James H. Furr. *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- McIntosh, Gary. *One Size Doesn't Fit All*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1999.
- Schaller, Lyle E. *Strategies for Change*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- White, Ellen G. *Pastoral Ministry*. Silver Springs, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995.
- Biehl, Bobb and Ted W. Engstrom. *The Effective Board Member*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998.

5. *Inspiring Worship:***a. In a Nutshell:**

Corporate worship is simply a time when the church enters into the presence of the most-high God of the universe to offer Him their praise and prayers, and hear His word in return. This experience should be all but mundane. It should be inspiring.

b. Biblical Support:

- “Worthy are Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created...” *Revelation 4:11*
- “Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for his mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with high-sounding cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord! *Psalms 150*
- “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.” *Psalms 122:1*

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “A constant effort to promote personal piety should be seen in the minister’s public labors. Sermon after sermon should not be given on the prophecies alone. Practical religion should have a place in every discourse.” *Signs of the Times*, March 16, 1882.
- “Our meetings should be made intensely interesting. They should be pervaded with the very atmosphere of heaven. Let there be no long, dry speeches and formal prayers merely for the sake of occupying the time. All should be ready to act their part with promptness, and when their duty is done, the meeting should be closed. Thus the interest will be kept up to the last. This is offering to God acceptable worship. His service should be made interesting and attractive and not allowed to degenerate into a dry form.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 609.
- “Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers... The lifeless attitude of the worshipers in the house of God is one great reason why the

ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies." *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, 492-493.

- "The prayers offered in public should be short and to the point. God does not require us to make the season of worship tedious by lengthy petitions... A few minutes is long enough for any ordinary public petition." *Gospel Workers*, 175.
- "Never allow the interest to flag. Devise methods that will bring a deep and living interest into the new churches. All connected with the church should feel an individual responsibility. All should work to the utmost of their ability to strengthen the church and make the meetings so full of life that outsiders will be attracted and interested. All should feel it a sin to let the interest wane when we have such sacred, solemn truths from the living oracles to repeat over and over again. Impress upon all the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of the members of the church, so that they will be living, growing, fruit-bearing trees of the Lord's planting." *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, 85.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Feeling of Inspiration**

1. When the final song is sung and worship is over – have you been inspired?
2. At the present what are the most inspiring aspects of your worship service? How can they be strengthened further?
3. How would you characterize your times of corporate

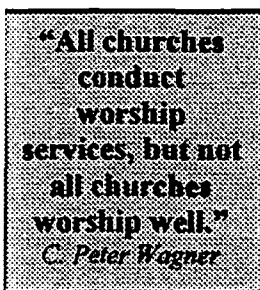
"If you preach the Gospel in all its aspects with the exception of the issues that deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the Gospel at all."
Martin Luther

4. How often does your church have opportunity to hear testimonies of how God has worked in the lives of your church family?

- **The Worship Service**

1. How long has it been since you changed the order of service in your church?
2. Who is responsible for what happens during your corporate worship service?
3. What does the church do to make sure Sabbath worship is an “awesome” experience for the younger members?
4. How much room is there in your church for creative expression through the arts, multi-media and music?
5. What process does the church have in place to evaluate the worship’s inspirational quality?
6. What kind of planning goes into the service in terms of time and talent?
7. How much prayer ministry is in place to support the worship service?

8. How is the whole Sabbath made an inspirational experience for your members?
9. When was the last time a sermon or seminar was given instructing your members on how to make Sabbath a worshipful experience?
10. What role does preaching have in your worship service? Is it achieving its desired purpose?
11. Is there any variation in the style of preaching from week to week? If so, does it communicate effectively to your target audience? How do you know if it does?
12. Do you provide nursery and baby-sitting facilities during your worship services?
13. Is there a system in place to evaluate the pastor's sermons? Who does the evaluating? What criteria are used? How often does it take place?



- **Visitor Friendly**

1. Is your church interested in making your church visitor-friendly? If so, what steps have been taken to make this a reality?

2. Do you use church-lingo during the services, which might not be understood by your visitors?
3. What are you doing to make your visitors feel welcome but yet allow them to keep their anonymity if they so desire?
4. Does your church consider its worship service an evangelistic event? If so, how is this reflected in the service?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Elect and consecrate a worship leader

Usually the Pastor is the sole person in charge of worship. This can be good and it can be bad. It is good in that at least someone is in charge. It can be bad in that Pastors have 200 other things on their mind. For this reason, regardless of your church size – find someone who can serve as a worship coordinator or leader.

Four issues need to be kept in mind when you chose someone to fill this key leadership position.

- First, it is of utmost importance that this person has a real and living relationship with Jesus. If there is doubt on this one point – then move on to another name.
- Second, make sure that you, as the Pastor, can work well with this person. What that means practically is – make sure you share generally the same theological and philosophical view on worship. If you are at odds on this point – you will have nothing but frustrations in the future.
- Thirdly, make sure that the person you are considering as worship leader has the ability to work well with other people. They must be able to recruit, motivate and lead a wide variety of people in planning, at times practicing and providing an inspiring worship experience on a week in and week out basis.

- Lastly, it would be good for this individual to be musically talented. This is not a must – but it would sure help!

2. Survey the members on their hopes for worship

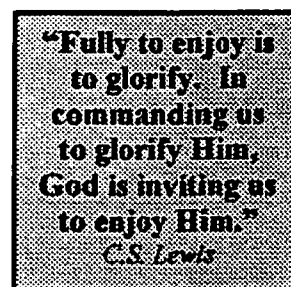
Take a survey on worship preferences, ideas and present attitudes towards worship.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next six months – the sooner the better – design a simple survey to discover the attitudes of your congregation about what is going on now in the worship service. Then ask them about their preferences and ideas for future worship formats.
- After you have implemented some changes to your worship service, do the survey again and see if there are any changes in the attitudes of your members.

3. Set up a worship team

After you have elected a worship leader – then put all your efforts in recruiting a group of individuals who will work with the worship leader in providing high quality, inspirational worship services to meet the particular needs and context of your congregation as well as those of your evangelistic target group.



Measurable Objective:

- In the next six months we will recruit _____ members to consecrate their time and talents in the area of providing inspiring worship.
- The worship team will work with the pastor in developing a theme for every worship service. In this way, all the elements of the worship service will work together towards a common goal.

4. Commit yourself to diversity and excellence

Even if you had Pavarotti sing for your special music every Sabbath – after a year of hearing him you would soon find yourself tuning him out. Enough already! A worship service that has little change for years on end loses its spontaneity; it loses its relevance. It stops engaging both heart and mind.

Measurable Objective:

-

The image is a very dark, low-contrast scan of a document page. It appears to be a single column of text, possibly a table of contents or index, but the content is almost entirely illegible due to the darkness and poor scan quality. Some faint outlines of text and possibly a table structure are visible, but no specific words or numbers can be reliably transcribed.

-

with our aspirations, our hopes, and gather strength, and light, and courage from one another.... From the light which I have received, our meetings should be spiritual and social.... Like a united family, simplicity, meekness, mutual confidence, and love should exist in the hearts of brethren and sisters who meet to be refreshed and invigorated by bringing their lights together. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 30, 1871.

- “If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 7, 22.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Group Leadership and Training**
 1. What kind of initial and ongoing training is available for your churches small group leadership? How often do you meet as a group of leaders?
 2. What kind of Natural Church Development training do your small group leaders receive?
 3. Where do your small groups fit into the “big picture” of the life of the church? What is their role? Do the leaders understand this?
 4. Does each of your groups have a designated leaders and assistant leader (apprentice)?
 5. Who is responsible for overseeing the small group ministry in your church?

6. What role does the church board have in the administration of your small group network?

7. How do you recruit new group leaders in your church?

- **Group Life**

1. Has your church identified the desired characteristics of a “holistic small group?”

2. What curriculum are the groups using and has it been designed with discipleship in mind? Is it answering today’s life questions?

3. Does your group leader understand the Natural Church Development paradigm and seek to incorporate and grow these quality characteristics in their small group life?

4. Do group leaders utilize biotic principles in their decision-making process? For example, do they consciously incorporate the principle of multiplication so that their groups are training the leaders for the next generation of groups?

5. What role does outreach play in the life of your groups?

6. What is the role of the assistant leader in the life of the group? Is it meaningful?
7. How would you describe the worship experience of your small group? Inspiring? Routine?
8. What role does prayer and singing play in the life of your small group?
9. Describe how the scriptural admonition to “love one another” is lived out in your small group life?
10. How often do group members get together and associate outside of the designated small group meeting time?

- **Group Multiplication**

1. How are small groups promoted in your church?
2. What avenues are available for new members to join a small group?
3. What is your strategy for group multiplication?

4. How often, and using what venues, can your small group members share the joy of their life in a small group?
5. What kind of follow up is done, and by whom, with visitors to the small groups?
6. How is the next generation of group leaders selected and trained for next-years small groups?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Preach on the importance and power of small groups

The reality of life in most churches is that most members have spent many a happy year in the church without ever having been part of a small group. So, why change now? This is the basic perspective the average member in the pew has. It is therefore important that the leadership in the church preach about the significance of small groups in the life of the church. The small groups role in discipleship, community building and evangelism should be highlighted and members should be invited to participate in this life-changing aspect of healthy church life.

It would be good to have first done the groundwork outlined in action step number two before you preach a series on small groups. That way, leaders are trained and ready to begin their small groups upon the invitation and call of the pastor.

2. Recruit and train small group leaders

Ideally you will want to have all the members in your church actively involved in small group life. But, this is a daunting task in an established church. If you are planting a new church, it is much easier to build this component of church life right into the DNA, so to speak, of the new church.

However, the most important ingredient is to prayerfully select and train a group of committed leaders in the church who agree to serve as small group leaders. If you have no small groups in your church – then just start with one or two. Make sure to recruit a leader and an assistant for each group. By having an assistant leader working in each group, leadership tasks can be shared. But most importantly, the group will be ready to multiply when the time comes.

Don't short-change your small group leaders by under-training them. There is a lot of good literature out there on small groups. Use it, not once – but often as you provide on-going coaching and huddle sessions for your small group leaders. So, train them with gusto. Here are a few suggestions for the upcoming months:

Measurable Objectives:

- In six months we will have _____ leaders and an equal number of assistant leaders trained and serving as small group leaders.
- I will find an apprentice and start my own group.
- Church leadership, ideally one of the pastors, will lead out in monthly follow-up meetings for the small group leaders. The purpose of these meetings will be for encouragement, spiritual growth, small group leadership modeling and further group leadership training.

3. Map out your small group strategy

Make sure you have your holistic small group plan well mapped out. Questions such as these should be included in your strategy:

- How will leadership be trained?
- What will our strategy for multiplying our small groups be?
- What size will we allow our small groups to grow to before we encourage them to multiply?
- What kind of holistic small groups can we start?
- What will our curriculum be?
- Will we all study the same thing? If not, why not?
- How will we communicate this strategy with the church at large?

- How will we build momentum?
- How will we recruit small group members?
- Who will recruit small group members?
- Will we assign members to small groups based on where they live?

(I would not recommend this. Let the members choose what group they would like to join. Just because there is a small group near their home doesn't mean that they will necessarily be able or willing to connect with that leader and with that group.)

Write the plan down and share it often and redundantly with your core leadership team as well as with the church. Remind them often of why it is your church believes in holistic small groups.

In this area it would be good to mention that the traditional cell group is not the only kind of holistic small group. With some training and help the following, already established groups can also become holistic centers of spiritual and relational growth:

- *Sabbath School:*

It is not easy to move a long established Sabbath School class towards being a holistic small group. But the task is not impossible. Help your Sabbath School leaders and teachers understand that times of group prayer, sharing, testimony and even praise – when combined with Bible study, will only enrich their Sabbath School time.

- *Youth Groups:*

There is already a common bond that brings the youth together. Capitalize on it. Add the dimension of prayer, sharing and testimony to your meetings. Mix in some praise and a sense of evangelistic responsibility and bam – you have a holistic small group.

- *Task Groups:*

Our church is full of task-specific groups just waiting to become holistic centers of healing and praise. Your choir, community service volunteers, deacons, deaconesses, elders, etc... all make up groups that can become disciple-making communities. A little training and encouragement and your choir members can enjoy a 15-20 minute study and prayer time before their weekly choir practice. The choir leaders could be invited to join the small group leadership team where she could

Small groups should be "gatherings of workers committed to reaching the lost through mutually strengthening faith, assimilating new members, and subdividing upon reaching a certain size."
John C. Miller

be trained and encouraged to help the choir members understand that they are a community of believers in need of each other. Choir can become a healing fellowship; a place of prayer, praise as well as practice.

- *Internet/ICQ:*

In our day and age when the computer is fast becoming the number one means of communication – why not encourage the more techy members of the church to join an online forum/chat room small group. Meet weekly online and with the direction of the moderator/small group leader, invite the members to pray, study and share their concerns and thoughts. What a great place to invite new members. Non-threatening but yet engaging.

4. Find some good curriculum

A meaningful curriculum for your groups to study is a key ingredient to experiencing the holistic nature of small group life. A curriculum that is too intellectual will leave the group members bewildered. A curriculum that is too shallow and airy will leave them wondering why they wasted their time.

In choosing, or in developing your own curriculum remember that the essence of the “holistic” quality of a group, and that is the ability of the small group to answer the questions and meet the needs of its members in the here and now. It must be practical. It must contain spiritual food to nourish the members for their life in the perplexing and at times frenetic times in which we live.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next 3 months our church will have agreed upon a suggested curriculum for our small groups.
- In the next 3 months our church will have agreed upon a suggested curriculum for our non-cell – traditional small groups.

5. Model small group leadership

It's time to put your money where your mouth is. If the leaders of the church are preaching and teaching about small groups but do not lead or participate in one themselves – well, actions will speak louder than words.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next three months the Pastor will find an assistant leader and begin a small group of their own.
- In the next six month at least 75% of all key leadership will be either a part of a small group or will be leading out in a small group as the leader or assistant leader.

f. Resources:

Arnold, Jeffery. *The Big Book on Small Groups*. Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1992.

Beckham, William A. *The Second Reformation: Reshaping the Church for the 21st Century*. La Vergne, TN: Spring Arbor Distributors, 1995.

Burrill, Russell. *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996.

Burrill, Russell. *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1997.

Cerna, Miguel A. *The Power of Small Groups*. Newbury Park, CA: El Camino Publishing, 1991.

Cox, David. *Think Big. Think Small Groups*. Watford, England: South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998.

Galloway, Dale. *20/20 Vision*. Portland, OR: Scott Publishing Company, 1986.

George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996.

Miller, C. John. *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1999.

Neighbor, Ralph W. *Where Do We Go From Here?: A Guidebook for the Cell Group Church*. La Vergne, TN: Spring Arbor Distributors, 2000.

7. Need-oriented Evangelism:**a. In a Nutshell:**

In order for evangelism to be effective we must meet people where they are. Communicate in terms they can understand. Offer them something they need in the here and now. In colloquial terms, we must scratch where it itches. This was Paul and Christ's method. It must be ours as well.

b. Biblical Support:

- “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law towards Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” *1 Corinthians 9:19-22*
- “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” *1 Corinthians 10:33*
- “The children of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do...” *1 Chronicles 12:32*

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.” *Ministry of Healing*, 143.
- “We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are.” *Desire of Ages*, 152.
- “The hearts of His hearers were drawn to Him; for He had healed their sick, had comforted their sorrowing ones, and had taken their children in His arms and blessed them.” *Christian Service*, 119.

- “Many have a deep sense of need—a need that earthly riches or pleasures cannot supply; but they know not how to receive that for which they are longing. The gospel of Christ is from beginning to end the gospel of saving grace. It will be a help to the needy, light for the eyes that are blind to the truth, and a guide to souls seeking for the foundation.” *Evangelism*, 552.
- “The hearts of His hearers were drawn to Him; for He had healed their sick, had comforted their sorrowing ones, and had taken their children in His arms and blessed them.” *Christian Service*, 119.
- “He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself, He presented a lesson that was appropriate to the time and the circumstances.” *Desire of Ages*, 91.

d. Quality Quotient Questions:

- **Personal Evangelism**
 1. Has the leadership in the church identified who in the congregation have the gift of evangelism?
 2. Have the members with the gift of evangelism been resourced, trained and placed in a ministry that utilizes this gift?
 3. Are church leaders and members alike seeking to build redemptive relationships with non-believers?
 4. What training opportunities have been provided in the last year for members to learn how to share their faith with friends and family?

5. How are people coming into your church? Take the time to draw a flowchart showing which entry events or individuals are responsible for your greatest inflow of new members.

- **Evangelistic Activities**

1. Has the church clearly identified *whom* they are trying to reach? Who is the church's primary target audience?
2. What are the needs of your church's target audience?
3. How many consciously planned entry-events has your church provided over the past few months for those you are trying to reach?
4. What role do your small groups play in evangelism?
5. What kind of harvesting event has your church had in the past year?
6. When did your church last hold an evangelistic meeting? Would such a series best attract and reach your target group?
7. What need-oriented event has your church conducted in the last year?

**"Churches are not
meant to be
centripetal, but
centrifugal."
C. Peter Wagner**

8. What percentage of your financial and human resources are directed towards the unbeliever? Are you happy with that amount?

9. Would you consider your worship service an evangelistic event? Is so, list the reasons why?

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Clearly identify your target audience

As a church, whom are you aiming to reach with the Gospel of Christ? If you say, “we are trying to reach everyone” then you have missed the lesson Jesus was trying to teach his disciples when he forbid them to go to Samaria. On that first missionary journey they were to concentrate and focus on the children of Israel.

Why? It would dilute their effectiveness to try and preach to everyone. It was also impossible. That is why I believe Paul focused on the Gentiles while Peter focused on the Jews. They understood their target audience and sharpened their tools to best meet the challenge ahead. We must do the same.

Who are you trying to reach as a church?

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next 3 months gather your leadership team together and prayerfully consider whom you are trying to reach. Who will you focus on preaching the gospel too. If you already have a mission statement – this should already have been identified. In that case, be more specific. Write it down. Is your primary target male or female? Young or old? How young or how old? How educated? Are they married? Any children? Grandchildren? What’s their economic position? What kind of clothes do they wear? What music do they enjoy listening to? (All these will impact what kind of evangelistic activities you will use to reach them – right?)

- Once you have clearly described whom it is you are trying to reach – and done so in written form, then communicate it with your church in a creative way. Remind them of it often. Encourage your church to pray that God will gift and enable the church dynamically and effectively reach your target person.

2. Study your target audience and begin at least three entry events for them

The men of Issachar understood the times. This knowledge helped them make a clear decision on what to do. That is why Aubrey Malphurs recommends that we must be culture watchers. We must be able to exegete the culture as readily as we are able to exegete the Scripture. We must, Malphurs says, be adept practitioners of the Gretzky Factor. What this means is that in order to play good hockey as well as be good leaders of the church in our day and age it is more important to know where the puck will be than where it is now.

In order to meet the needs of your target audience you must be able to know what they are. Once you know what they are you can strategically design events and start ministries that will help to meet these needs.

Measurable Objectives:

- In the next two months, recruit two people in your church to be the church's point-people, trend-watchers. Have them daily scan the local newspaper for cultural, financial or other trends emerging in your community. If available, have this same team of culture-watchers join or listen-in to any community council meetings, internet community forums, etc... Meet with them once a month or once every two months to glean what they have learned about your community. Then allow this to inform not only your preaching, but the plans you make to move your church towards a need-oriented evangelism methodology.
- In the next two months make an appointment to visit with the city councilman that represents your district. Discuss with this person your church's desire to help meet the needs of the community. Ask them what they see these needs to be. Take careful note of what they say.
- Join a local community organization such as the Lion's Club or Rotary. Listen and learn from what you see and hear.

3. Train your members to give a personal witness

Enjoying a bountiful harvest presupposes a bountiful planting season. In the local church this translates into three very measurable objectives.

Measurable Objectives:

- Every member needs to develop relationships with unchurched or non-members. These are redemptive friendships. These are the seeds, which when watered and ministered by the Holy Spirit and the words and life of the Christian can produce a bountiful harvest.

With this in mind, encourage your members to begin forming at least one meaningful friendship with a non-member over the next six months. By meaningful friendship I don't mean a casual acquaintance. I mean someone you call on regularly. Someone you enjoy outings with, meals with. A real friend.

In this regard, it would be good for the pastoral leadership to take an active role. Pastors need to lead by example.

- Once the relationships are on the way it is then imperative that every member be given the opportunity to learn how to give a verbal witness to their faith. Tragically, a study conducted by the magazine *Christianity Today* showed that only 1% of its readers had recently shared the gospel with a non-believer. Even more startling is the fact that in the United States only 1.7 new people are brought to the church for every 100 regular church attendees.²¹

The greatest reason for this state of affairs is that many members feel ill equipped to share their faith. A simple and easily practiced method of sharing their faith needs to be shared with your members over the next six months. During a training event, whether it is from the pulpit or in a seminar setting, emphasize the key role of life-style witnessing as a definite pre-cursor to any meaningful verbal witness.

- Make sure that your ministries, your programs – and yes, even your worship service, is both need-oriented and visitor friendly. This will insure an accessible and non-threatening front door by which your members can bring their unbelieving friends.

4. Plan at least one harvest event a year

All the planting in the world will not guarantee a storehouse full of fruit. The Lord is the one that produces the growth and fruit, but we are still called as His servants to go into the harvest. Harvesting must be strategically carried out – every season. Too many churches assume that the fruit will naturally come in. And some fruit miraculously does find its way into the storehouse. However, the vast majority of the fruit is waiting for the picking.

Translated into the local church setting this means that the local church must intentionally plan at least one harvest event a year.

Measurable Objectives:

- By _____ of the year _____ we will conduct the following harvest event:

- The reason we have chosen this kind of event is that it will best reach our target audience by:

5. Identify those with the gift of evangelism

The research done by the Natural Church Development team discovered that 70% of growing, high quality church leadership knew who in the church had the gift evangelism. This compared to 21% of low quality, declining church leadership. The key wisdom nugget here is that growing churches know who is gifted in evangelism – they then train them, equip them, and set them loose to do what God has gifted them to do.

Measurable Objective:

- By _____ we will conduct a spiritual gift inventory in our church in order to help our members identify their primary spiritual gifts as well as to inform the church leadership who in their midst has the gift of evangelism.
- Once you know who in the church have the gift of evangelism, then what? What will you have them do? What role will they play in the evangelistic initiatives of the church?

f. Resources:

Hybels, Bill and Mark Mittleberg. *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

Mittleberg, Mark. *Building a Contagious Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000.

Sahlin, Monte and Curtis Rittenour. *Friend2Friend*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry, 2001. (Can be ordered from www.creativeministry.org)

Sahlin, Monte. *Sharing Our Faith With Friends Without Losing Either*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990.

Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

White, Ellen G. *Christian Service*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947.

White, Ellen G. *Gospel Workers*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1915.

8. Loving Relationships:**a. In a Nutshell:**

The quality of the fellowship, love and healing power that are present in a congregation says a lot about the spiritual health of the church. When a church is cold, abrasive and lacking in real heart-felt communion, it cannot expect to experience any kind of real growth.

b. Biblical Support:

- “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” *John 13:35*
- “God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one members is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” *1 Corinthians 12:24-26*
- “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” *1 John 4:7-8*
- “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” *1 John 3:11*
- “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” *1 Thessalonians 4:9*

c. Spirit of Prophecy Support:

- “The golden chain of love, binding the hearts of the believers in unity, in bonds of fellowship and love, and in oneness with Christ and the Father, makes the connection perfect, and bears to the world a testimony of the power of Christianity that cannot be controverted.” *God’s Amazing Grace*, 237.
- “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where there is only one.” *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, 189.
- “It is the law of heaven that as we receive we are to impart. The Christian is to be a benefit to others; thus he himself is benefited. “He that watereth

- “Each believer is as a beam of light from Christ the Sun of righteousness. The more closely we walk with Christ, the center of all love and light, the greater will be our affection for His light-bearers. When the saints are drawn close to Christ, they must of necessity be drawn close to each other, for the sanctifying grace of Christ will bind their hearts together. You cannot love God and yet fail to love your brethren.” *1888 Materials*, 1048-1049.

- **Promotion**

1. How friendly would you say your church is? How did you arrive at your conclusion?
2. Is there a sense of peace and joy in the congregational life of the church?
3. How is relationship and community building promoted in your church?
4. Does your church schedule time for visiting and “catching-up” into its Sabbath morning schedule?
5. How does the church promote and train its members on the importance of living out the “love one-another” commands in the Bible?

6. How are the church leaders doing at modeling loving relationships?
7. Has a seminar such as “Learning to Love” been held in your church lately? If not, why not?

- **Growth Opportunities**

1. What social events are planned into your church calendar that will promote loving relationships?
2. Does the church have any sort of sports program for young and old?
3. How often do your members invite one another to their homes for a meal, or go out together for purely social reasons?
4. How can your committee times incorporate opportunities for your members to build loving relationships?
5. What role do your Sabbath School classes play in building loving relationships in your church? How can it be improved?
6. How does your church show the visitor love?

- **Dealing with Conflict**

1. Is there any open conflict in the church that could be influencing your church's loving relationship quality quotient?
2. How is conflict generally handled in your church?
3. On a piece of paper, map-out the "influence" structure in your church? Where does most of the influence in the church come from? How does this fact affect the rest of the church?

"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. He will do harm to himself and to the community."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

e. Five Action Steps:

1. Plan some relationship-building time into Sabbath morning

It is true that on Sabbath morning we run a pretty tight program. However, if your minimum factor happens to be Loving Relationship, then you should think about building in some time for your members to just catch-up with each other; to talk and socialize. This time will not be wasted. On the contrary, it will highlight the value your church places on relationships and will go along way to improve your minimum factor.

Measurable Objectives:

- Starting on _____ our church will schedule _____ minutes of family time (or whatever you want to call it) each Sabbath. This will take place at the following time: _____

Issues that you will need to consider in planning this kind of initiative might include:

1. Where will our members visit?
2. How long will these visiting times last?
3. When will they occur in our Sabbath morning schedule?
4. Will any refreshments be provided?
5. How will this special time be introduced and promoted?
6. What criteria will we use to measure its effectiveness?

- We will evaluate this family time after _____ weeks and decide on whether we need to add or shorten the time or maybe change its place in the morning schedule. We will evaluate all components of this new relational emphasis. We will do this evaluation by: _____
-
-

2. As Pastor, do a teaching series on all the “one-another” Bible texts

Pull out your preaching calendar and sometime in the next six months schedule a good month-worth of Sabbaths for preaching on the Biblical qualities of Christian relationships. Use as your guide the many scriptures dealing with how members of the Body of Christ are to treat one another.

3. Build a small group network

There is no better and fertile ground for loving relationships to flourish and bear fruit than in a holistic small group. In fact, it is often the case that churches with a minimum factor of loving relationships will also have quite a low profile score in holistic small groups. The opposite is also the case. Therefore, if you have very few – or even no small groups, this is a definite place you can start to build better loving relationships in your church.

For some suggestions on how to begin or improve your existing small groups, please refer to the section on Holistic Small Groups.

4. Improve your visitor friendliness

This is an area where you really need some outside, unbiased assistance. Why not invite a number of non-members to assist you in evaluating your church's visitor friendliness. Design a simple survey that covers issues such as:

- Ease and availability of parking
- Internal and external church signage
- Friendliness and helpfulness of greeters
- Cleanliness and maintenance of the church building and property
- Overall street appeal
- Lighting
- Quality and use of the sound system
- Bulletin
- Visitor friendly language in the hymns and from the speakers
- Friendliness of members
- Friendliness of pastor(s)
- Sense of warmth and acceptance

5. Develop a plan for dealing with conflict

Proverbs 21:31 states that "the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is on the Lord." Even though in the end it is God that will see the church through any future conflict or problem, it is still important to make responsible preparations and plans for any eventual problems.

Measurable Objective:

1. Over the course of the next six-month, together with your key leadership, discuss and make a plan on how to deal with potential conflict and misunderstandings. You might consider starting with these issues:

1. What kind of communication system do we have in place to make sure all the members know about changes taking place in the church?
2. What kind of forum is available to listen to the members, their ideas, concerns and fears?
3. Where can the members “let off steam”?
4. What criteria will we use to identify “life-giving” as opposed to “life-threatening” conflict? How will we handle each of these kinds of conflict?²²

f. Resources:

Cooper, Douglas. *Living God's Love*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995.

Corrigan, Thom. *Experiencing Community*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1996.

Frazee, Randy, Dallas Willard. *The Connected Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001.

Hestenes, Roberta. *Turning Committees into Communities*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1991.

Resolving Conflict and Building Community. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1997.



SECTION FOUR: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. A non-Seventh-day Adventist developed Natural Church Development. Should we be using material that has not been developed by our church?

Let me answer this by drawing your attention to a number of facts:

- Our church has often used non-Seventh-day Adventist material. One look at a list of books that were found in Ellen White's library and you can understand that there is much to learn and glean from other Christian authors. Truth is truth no matter where it comes from. This leads me to the next point.
- The church should not embrace any material without first measuring it against the standards of truth which have been revealed to us as a church. This is best illustrated by looking at the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. How many of the hymns which we sing Sabbath after Sabbath were written by Adventist composers? Very, very few. Week after week we sing songs written by Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and the list goes on. However, the content and theology of each song has been carefully examined by a group of people to check for theological accuracy and integrity.

The same has happened with this material. Many denominational leaders from around the world have read, studied and verified that the basic principles as outlined in Natural Church Development are in harmony with the teachings of our church.

2. How accurate is this tool to determine our church health?

The survey tool was designed and tested extensively. It is a highly accurate instrument in assessing congregational health based on the eight quality characteristics.²³ The best way to answer this is to say, check it out! Again and again we have found that congregations find the results to be an accurate description of the reality of their church life. However, in some cases the actual scores attributed to each quality characteristic could be less than totally accurate. This would be the case if your church only filled out 20 surveys instead of the ideal 30 surveys. The fewer surveys your church fills out the less accurate the test will be.

However, having said that, the general trends of church health should still be visible. Your scores might not be super accurate, but the ups and downs of your church's health will still be visible.

3. Is this kind of qualitative measuring model being used anywhere else?

It is interesting to note that the statistical model of measuring qualitative elements is not isolated to NCD. In a book written in 1997 by Rob Lebow and William L. Simon entitled, *Lasting Change*, they outline a process they have gone through to discover the quality characteristics of a productive and “heroic” work environment. Their particular concern was how to create a healthy work environment that would help people play at the “top of their game.”

They discovered a research project conducted by the University of Chicago in which 17 million surveys were analyzed from 40 countries dealing with what characteristics they felt would help create an environment of productivity and creativity in the work place. The result was what Lebow and Simon call the Eight Shared Values of the Heroic Work Environment. These values are: Truth: Treat others with uncompromising truth; Trust: Lavish trust on your associates; Mentoring: Mentor unselfishly; Openness: Be receptive to new ideas; Risk-taking: Take personal risks for the good of the organization; Giving credit: Give credit where it’s due; Honesty: Be honest in all dealing; do not touch dishonest dollars; Caring: Put the interests of others before your own.

With these values clearly identified they then developed a survey instrument where they could enter any work place, assess their Heroic Value quotient and work with leadership to develop a strategic plan to strengthen areas of weakness.

4. *How much does it cost to do the survey?*

This will vary from place to place and on how much other material you purchase along with the survey. You can expect to pay US\$150 to do the survey. The NCD national partner and the Institute of Natural Church Development in

Germany, who funded the original research, divide these funds. In addition, each national partner is required to send the Institute in Germany all new survey results, which are then processed and added to the ongoing research work being done on church health.

“I believe the will of God prevails; without Him all human reliance is vain; without the assistance of that Divine Being I cannot succeed; with that assistance I cannot fail.”
Abraham Lincoln

5. *Are the statistical methods used valid for this kind of research?*

For those of you interested in the statistical background of Natural Church Development, I would refer you to the paper written by Christoph Schalk, the organizational psychologist who designed the survey instrument. In this paper he outlines the statistical process used in designing the survey instrument. The reference for his work is:

Schalk, Christoph. *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches*. Würzburg, Germany: Christoph Schalk, 1999.

6. *Are any other Seventh-day Adventist churches using this material?*

No one knows the total number of Adventist using this material, but it is safe to say that the number is very large. By very large I mean in the hundreds. Hundreds of churches in the United States are using the material as well as Adventist churches in, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Germany and other countries in Europe.

7. *What is the most common minimum factor in SDA churches in the United States?*

From a recent study done of 38 churches in the United States who had completed the NCD survey it was discovered that Gift-Oriented Ministry was the most common minimum factor. Right behind it was Holistic Small Groups.

8. *Couldn't there be other quality characteristics that are integral to a healthy church? And what about biotic principles – could there be other biotic principles that are not listed in the Natural Church Development material?*

The answer is yes. The eight quality characteristics are those that were most obvious and universally discernable of all the qualities that could have been enumerated. There has been some discussion among NCD enthusiast to adding a ninth quality that could be called Faithful Stewardship. At the present, this quality is wrapped up in Passionate Spirituality.

Another suggestion being made for a quality characteristic within Adventism is a trait called Inspiring Identity. This principle is based on the premise that when a church understands that individually and corporately they are the body of Christ; that they are individually also a living temple; and that they are called for the specific and prophetic purpose of preaching the Three Angels Message in earth's final hour, this cognitive and sociologically confessed identity and sense of purpose cannot help but inspire and motivate a church to better health.

As for the issue of additional biotic principles, some have suggested the natural principle of adaptation. There is a certain flexibility found in nature that allows houseplants, for example, to literally turn their leaves towards the sun; that allows organisms to adapt to their changing environment. A healthy church, in turn, should show a certain healthy flexibility and adaptability. Rigidity is not a biotic trait.

9. *How can I order the SDA version of the survey?*

Great question! You may contact the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI) at the following address and phone number and they will be happy to help you:

NADEI
9047 US 31 N, Suite 3
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Phone: 616-471-9220 Fax: 616-471-9211
Email: info@NADEI.org

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21

¹ Direction Ministry's resource can be downloaded from the extensive library found at www.coachnet.org.

² For a list of resources on the topic of church health please refer to the "Resource List" at the end of this section.

³ Edwards, Rex. "The Church: It's Nature and Design." *Ministry*, July/August, 1995, 36.

⁴ Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 3.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical references will be from the New King James Version.

⁶ Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*, (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 8.

⁷ In the research conducted by Robert Folkenberg, Jr. for his D. Min project on the subject of the Natural Church Development paradigm in Adventist churches he discovered that 6 or more months after taking the NCD survey 42% of churches still had no implementation plan to improve their minimum factor.

⁸ John Grys and Greg Schaller, "Growing a Healthy Church (part 1)," *A Ministry*, January 2001, 9.

⁹ Norman Shawchuck and Gustave Rath, *Benchmarks of Quality in the Church*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 14.

¹⁰ All these resources are available from the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI) and their NAD NCD Resource center. Orders can be placed via the Internet at www.nadei.org.

¹¹ Many of the suggestions provided in this section are taken from Lyle Schaller's excellent work entitled, *Strategies for Change*. This should be on any Pastor's "must read list" if they are interested in better understanding how to successfully bring about change in a congregation.

¹² For a wide range of very helpful worksheets, online resources for developing an effective implementation plan, you can go to www.coachnet.org.

¹³ *The Challenge of Implementing the Biotic Principles*, (Direction Ministry Resources, January 2000), 12-28. The six questions come directly from this very helpful booklet on applying the Biotic

Principles to the local church. The definition for Symbiosis also is taken from this resource. The original questions find their origin in Schwarz' book *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development*.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Dave Wetzler of ChurchSmart Resources for this simple definition, as well as the "win-win" definition for Symbiosis.

¹⁵ Herrington, Bonem and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 8-9.

¹⁶ George Hardy, *Successfully Managing Change*. (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Services, 1997), 88.

¹⁷ Some of the questions in this and other Quality Quotient Questions sections have been derived from CoachNet's and Tom Wymore's *Evaluating the Quality Characteristic* material taken from www.coachnet.org. I am also indebted to that document for the format I have used.

¹⁸ Warren, Rick. *Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

¹⁹ The last two questions are taken directly from Robert E. Logan, *NCD Evaluation: Evaluating Functional Structures*, CoachNet, www.coachnet.org, p. 1.

²⁰ Lyle Schaller, *Advanced Strategic Planning*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 107.

²¹ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 27.

²² For an excellent book dealing with the change dynamic and the possible conflict change can illicit please read the book by Herrington, Bonem and Furr entitled, *Leading Congregation Change*. The section on conflict on pages 8-10 will be especially helpful.

²³ If you are interested in a thorough look at the statistical issues related to the NCD survey instrument, you could order the booklet by Christoph Schalk, *Organizational Diagnosis of Churches*. Würzburg, Germany: Christoph Schalk, 1999.

Easy-Reference Implementation Checklist

Appendix 1

Use this checklist as your own personal progress sheet. Feel free to check off those actions you have completed so as to keep better track of your progress.

Steps	✓	To Do 1	✓	To Do 2	✓	Date Completed
ONE		1. Personal Check-up		a. Spiritual Check-up		
				b. Leadership Check-up		
		2. Church Check-up		a. Read NCD Book		
				b. Give NCD Intro book to leaders		
				c. Board approval for to do profile		
				d. Invite up to 30 members to take the survey		
				e. Pastor fill out Pastor's survey		
				f. Members meet to do survey		
				g. Send the surveys in for processing		
TWO		1. Improve the quality of Pastoral Care				
		2. Preach a series on Church Health and NCD Principles				
		3. Set-up prayer ministry				
		4. Affirm positive traditions				
		5. Identify influencers				
		6. Build momentum				
		7. Create high quality, redundant communication network				
		8. Build wide circle of dissatisfaction with status quo				
		9. Set-up Task Force				
THREE		1. Task Force develops six-month implementation plan				
		2. Church Board approves plan				
		3. Church in business session approves plan				
		4. Prepared to handle conflict constructively				
FOUR		1. Set-up steering committee				
		2. Plan for ongoing communication in place				
		3. Checkpoints set up for evaluation – work the plan				
		4. Date set for next profile				

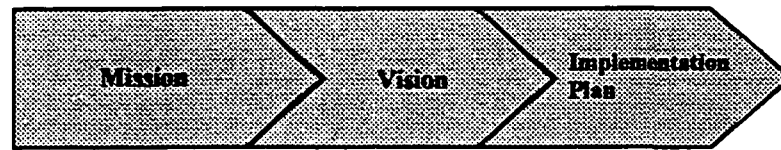
Implementation Planning Form - Appendix 2

Church Name:	Date of Profile:
Mission Summary:	Minimum Factor: Next Lowest Factor:
Vision Summary:	Implementation Plan Approval Date:
Core Values:	Agreed Upon Checkpoints/Evaluation Dates:

Action Plan	Measurable Objectives	Biotic Principle	Completion Date	Responsibility
1.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
2.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
3.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
4.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
5.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
6.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
7.	1.			
	2.			
	3.			

Mission, Vision, and Visionpathⁱ

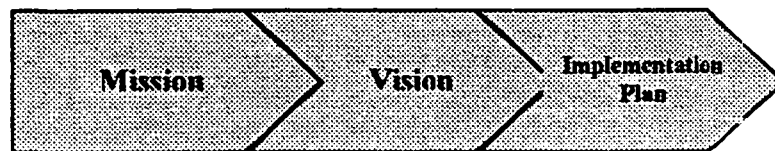
Appendix 3



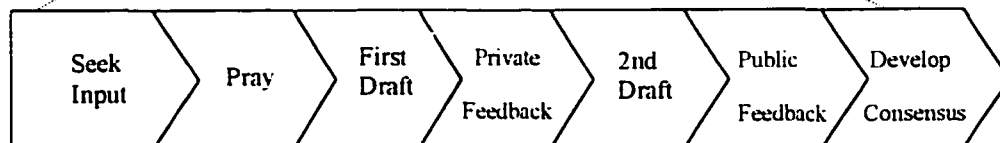
Definition	General description of God's eternal purpose for the church	Clear, shared, and compelling picture of the preferred future which God is calling the congregation	More detailed description of the steps that will be taken to achieve the vision
Length	One to two sentences	Several sentences or paragraphs	Several pages
Time Frame	Eternal	3-5 years	1 year
Key Question	<i>For what purpose did God establish the church?</i>	<i>What is God's specific call for our congregation?</i>	<i>How will our congregation achieve God's vision?</i>
Necessary Perspective	Bible	Mission Prayer Discernment Church's context Vision Community	Mission & Vision Current reality Bodylife - congregation as a system

* Herrington calls it a Visionpath

A Process for Discerning Mission and Vision and Implementation Plan



The same process steps are applicable for mission, vision and Implementation Plan



ⁱ Permission to reprint obtained from the authors. Herrington, Boncm and Furr. Leading Congregational Change. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 50-53.

Vision Tree

Appendix 4

Think of your church as a tree. A tree planted by the rivers of water (Ps. 1:3). Below you will find a picture of your church, your tree. Your task is to work together with your leadership to define this tree in all its detail. Your job is to prayerfully describe your Vision Tree.¹



Soil = Biblical Doctrines; 27 Fundamentals

Roots = Core Values; answer the question – What matters to us?

Trunk = Mission Statement

Branches = Ministry Structure; Organization Structure

Leaves = Public Events and Ministries

Fruit = Results of ministry

Picture of Tree = Overall Church Vision

Swing = Living and working in healthy and growing church is a lot of fun!

¹ The Vision Tree was introduced to the author by Ron Gladden, a long time church pastor and church-planter, who now serves as a consultant to many church plants across the country.

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